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ABSTRACT

Two specific questions guide this study: (1) Did teacher-centered instruction persevere in public schools during and after reform movements that had as one of their targets installing student-centered instruction? and (2) If the answer is yes, to what extent did it persist and why? If the answer is no, to what extent did instruction change and why? The first section opens with a description of teaching in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries taken from both primary and secondary sources. The progressive reforms of these years are included. This description is followed by a chapter of case studies on New York City, Denver, and Washington, D.C. during the 1920s and 1930s. Chapter three surveys teaching practices nationally during these two decades, including rural schools. Case studies of classroom practices in Washington, D.C., New York City, and North Dakota between 1965 and 1980 are summarized. The final section on classroom practices offers an intensive look at classroom teaching in Arlington, Virginia schools (1974-81). The concluding chapter is an essay on continuity and change in teaching in this century. (JD)

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PREFACE

I began this study as a school superintendent and completed it as a professor. The blend of practice with teaching and research at the university simply reaffirms my deeply-held belief that worthwhile knowledge draws from both worlds. Indeed, the separation of practice from theory, of practitioners from researchers is, more often than not, a divorce that is more symbolic rather than real. My quarter-century of experience in public schools shuttling back and forth between teaching and administering persuaded me that the daily realities of classrooms and schools produced knowledge of much worth that required conceptual frameworks to enlarge my understanding of what things I faced daily meant. The interplay between knowledge derived from experience in schools and that which researchers studied helped me greatly in grasping the meaning of both organizational and individual behavior in public schools.

This study of classroom teaching over the last century is part of my journey in trying to understand the complexity of schools and the process of change. Because I have taught for many years and served as a school superintendent for seven years, I needed to find out some answers to questions that had nagged at me for a long time about what happened in schools that I taught in and had the chance to observe directly when I served as an administrator. The questions I ask and the answers I found construct the boundaries of this study.

Any investigation that takes eighteen months to complete required the help of many kind individuals who shared their time and advice. Historical research often means time spent in libraries. In New York City, Pauline Pincus who served in the school system's Professional Library located at 110 Livinston Street was especially helpful in tracking down sources I could not find elsewhere. Robert Morris of Teachers College took time to introduce me to their newly-acquired archives from the New York City Public Schools. Lillian Weber gave me a morning to tell of her efforts in New York, her views of the informal education movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and some persistent issues in schooling. Her insights helped me revise a number of assumptions.

In Denver, Ellengail Buehtel who directs the district's professional library helped me locate a number of sources that I had given up on ever finding. John Rankin in Public Information was especially gracious in arranging for me to use student yearbooks, clipping files, and photographs stored in the basement of the administration building.

Researching the Washington, D.C. schools in two time periods was made easier by the sources located in the District of Columbia Public Library's Washingtonia Room. In the school system, Erika Robinson and Maggie Howard of the Division of Research were especially helpful in locating sources and patient with my use of their space. Bill Webb in the Media Center let me see photographs of classrooms taken since the mid-60s.

Gordon York, Assistant Superintendent of the Grand Forks, North Dakota Public Schools and Fargo Assistant Superintendent of Instruction Glenn Melvey arranged for me visits to each of the schools I had requested. The principals and teachers who put up with my note-taking and questions, I cannot name but appreciated their patience nonetheless.

Reviewers of the manuscript followed my instructions to give it a tough, close reading. I appreciated the prompt and full responses from Elisabeth Hansot, Carl Kaestle, Joseph Kett, Marvin Lazerson, Kim Marshall, and David Tyack. They are absolved of responsibility for any errors in fact or judgment that persist in the final study.

I particularly want to acknowledge the help of Charles Missar, Librarian for the National Institute of Education. He was especially gracious and patient with an ex-superintendent unlimbering rusty research muscles. I appreciated his help a great deal. And NIE itself deserves a brief acknowledgment. I feel awkward thanking an organization for taking a risk in betting that a school superintendent could carry off a complex historical investigation. Usually, I thank individuals but a large number of people were involved in making the decision to fund this research. I thank them for having confidence in this practitioner-researcher.

Finally, as in every single writing venture I have undertaken, my wife Barbara has helped at some stage with either the mechanics, proof-reading, or providing support. Thanks.

I have written a great deal over the last twenty years about education. I cannot say what it has amounted to but, for this study, I can say it was the most satisfying. It scratched an itch that had been bothering me for a number of years.

INTRODUCTION

I have worked as a public school teacher, administrator, and researcher in four school systems for a quarter-century. Over the years basic questions on schooling arose that seemed unanswerable or, for me, had no persuasive response either in my experience or in the research literature. Let me share a few of these questions that have troubled me.

I have been in many classrooms in the last decade. When I watched teachers in secondary schools a flash of recognition jumped out of my memory and swept over me. What I saw was almost exactly what I remembered of the junior and senior high classrooms that I sat in as a student and what I can evoke of my teaching in the mid-1950s. This acute sense of recall about how teachers were teaching occurred in many different schools. How, I asked myself, could teaching over a forty year period *seem*, and I mean to underline the word, almost the same?

Longtime union leader Albert Shanker made a similar observation that only gave further weight to my question.

> Ten thousand new teachers each year enter the New York City school system as a result of retirement, death, job turnover, and attrition. These new teachers come from all over the country. They represent all religions, races, political persuasions, and educational institutions. But the amazing thing is that, after three weeks in the classroom you can't tell them from the teachers they replaced.[1]

His observation, while sharply drawn, underscored the puzzling question of apparent uniformity in instruction over time.

During the last decade, serving as a decision-maker in two local school districts I have had to deal with another question that puzzled me: in institutions so apparently vulnerable to change as schools why do so few instructional reforms get past the classroom door? These questions, I believe, are linked together. The apparent uniformity in instruction regardless of time and place is related to the apparent invulnerability of classrooms to change.

In a paper commissioned by the National Institute of Education (NIE), I sought answers to these questions through a study of curriculum change and stability since 1870.[2] In examining how various forces shaped the curriculum and their consequences for classrooms over the last century, I used the metaphor of a hurricane to distinguish between curriculum theory, courses of study, materials, and classroom instruction. Hurricane winds sweep across the sea tossing up twenty foot waves; a fathom below the surface turbulent waters swirl while on the ocean floor there is unruffled calm.

As tricky as metaphors can be, I compared that hurricane to any newly-trumpeted curriculum theory. Professional journals, for example, echo pro and con arguments on that theory. Letters to editors and sharp rebuttals yet add to the flurry. Books are written and reputations are made. Conferences host skeptics of the theory and replies from advocates. Professors of education teach the new wisdom to students. Yet most publishers continue producing texts untouched by that theory. Meanwhile most teachers use methods unmarked by controversy, slogans, and journal articles or convention programs. I used this metaphor for its utility in illustrating distinctions between theory, content, materials, and, most important, impact upon teaching behavior.

In this NIE paper I found that curriculum theories did influence professional ideologies and vocabularies, courses of study, and some textbook content. But I did not find much evidence of significant change in teaching practices. However, I did not systematically or comprehensively examine primary sources or research any school districts. I used secondary sources for the most part and a few primary documents that were available. Based upon this initial review I found evidence of a seemingly stubborn continuity in teacher-centered instruction despite intense reform efforts to move classroom practices toward instruction that was more student-centered.

Deepening the paradox further, the limited evidence suggested that teacher-centered instruction seemed uncommonly stable at all levels of schooling touching students of diverse abilities in different settings over many decades in spite of extensive teacher education. In dealing with this paradox researchers have tied more knots than they loosened. Some writers assert that progressive teaching practices were embraced by teachers, while others argue that such classroom changes are seldom institutionalized. Common to all the various writers is the severely limited evidence about what teachers have done in classrooms.[3]

Scanty evidence about the stability of teacher-centered instruction drove me toward asking a fundamental question: how did teachers teach? The fragments of knowledge about what teachers did in their classrooms need to be brought together to give a cumulative clarity albeit at still a tentative stage of generalization. This study begins work on that task.[4]

Before proceeding further, let me state plainly what I mean by teacher- and student-centered instruction. Teacher-centered instruction means that a teacher controls what is taught, when, and under what conditions within his or her classroom. Observable measures of teacher-centered instruction

.Teacher talk exceeds student talk during instruction,

.Instruction occurs frequently with the whole class; small group or individual instruction occurs less frequently.

.Use of class time is determined by the teacher,

.Teachers often use textbooks; there is less use of films, tapes, records, television, or other technology,

.Tests usually concentrate upon factual recall of information,

.The classroom is usually arranged into rows of desks or chairs facing a blackboard with a teacher's desk nearby.

Student-centered instruction means that students exercise a substantial degree of direction and responsibility for what is taught, for how it is learned, and for any movement within the classroom. Observable measures of student-centered instruction are:

.Student talk on learning tasks is at least equal to, if not more than, teacher talk,

.Most instruction occurs either individually, in small (two to six students) or moderately-sized (seven to twelve) groups rather than the whole class,

.Students help choose and organize the content to be learned,

.Teacher permits students to determine, partially or wholly, rules of behavior and penalties in classroom and how they are enforced,

.Varied instructional materials are available in the classroom so that students can use them independently or in small groups, e.g. interest centers, teaching stations, activity centers, etc.,

.Use of these materials is either scheduled by the teacher or determined by students for at least half of the academic time available.

.Tests are designed to assess student opinions, creativity, thinking skills, and content.

.Classroom is usually arranged in a manner that permits students to work together or separately in small groups or in individual work space; no dominant pattern exists and much movement of desks, tables, and chairs occurs in realigning furniture and space.

These concepts of teacher- and student-centered instruction should be viewed as constructs to help in determining what happened in classrooms. As constructs they are limited because they are arbitrary; they often lack precision. At different times, for example, student-centered instruction is used as a synonym for progressive practices or the open classroom. Moreover, they simplify complex classroom events. Even with these shortcomings, these concepts can help sort out, however crudely, various teaching patterns, especially when these patterns are arrayed on a continuum. Of even greater importance, I believe, is to weigh these shortcomings against the simple fact that there are so few studies that have captured concretely what teachers have done in classrooms over time.

In using these constructs, I do not assume that actual change in practice moved only from teacher- to student-centered; traffic flowed both ways regardless of reformers' intentions. Individual teachers stopped at various places along the way. Nor do I assume that changes in teaching behavior were an all-or-nothing embrace of an entire approach. Quite often, as this study will show, teachers incorporated into their repertoires particular practices they found useful. An elementtary teacher in 1929, for example, whose only classroom change in years was to divide her class into two groups for reading, teaching one in the front of the room while the rest worked at their desks on an assignment, had added a new practice to her arsenal of teaching methods. Or take a high school history teacher in 1933 who began using examples from contemporary political life to freshen up his students' study of the French Revolution.

While pedagogical progressives of the time might have winced at my wording and labeled such changes as trivial, these teachers had adopted progressive practices, albeit selectively. On a continuum there needs to be space for progressive teacher-centered instruction as there would be space for the various types of student-centered instruction more familiar to progressive reformers.

The various adaptations of progressive pedagogy that teachers incorporated into their practice are just as puzzling, if not interesting, as what was ignored. The range of teaching practice contained in this study tries to describe a variety of teaching behaviors.[5]

Despite individual teaching differences, observers can, I believe, still categorize instructional patterns by careful attention to at least five visible areas of classroom decisionmaking over which teachers have direct influence.These classroom indicators can suggest dominant forms of instruction, especially when they combine to create patterns.

1. Arrangement of classroom space
2. Ratio of teacher to student talk
3. Whether most instruction occurs individually, in small groups, or with the entire class;

4. The presence of learning or interest centers that are used by students as part of the normal school day;
5. The degree of movement students are permitted without asking the teacher.[6]

In seeking to describe classroom practices I had to narrow my scope. No judgments will be made about the effectiveness of teacher-or student-centered instruction. Nor will comparisons be made between teaching practices. Nor will this study deal with the emotional climate of the classroom or the relationship between adults and children--as important as these issues are. The central research issue for me is to determine how stable certain teaching behaviors were decade after decade in the face of mighty efforts to move it toward student-centered instruction--not the relative value of teacher-centered instruction in achieving student outcomes. However, there is little point in determining which teaching behaviors produce improved student performance until researchers find out which teaching acts persist over time, which have changed, and why.

Given these limits, an obvious question arises: if this research will not reveal what is "good" or "poor" teaching or how some teachers are better than others at creating positive classroom climates, then, of what practical use will the research be? This is a fair question because it raises the issue of the intersection between research and practice. Without getting into the merits of applied or basic research, the value of incremental knowledge, or the particular uses of this study that I lay out in my final section, let me now mention one point concerning the significance of constructing historical maps of teaching practices.

Powerful metaphors dominate the thinking of practitioners, policymakers, and scholars on schools. In The Process of Schooling, J.M. Stephens writes that the common metaphor for schools is the factory. This image, like that of a machine, reinforces rational decisionmaking, suggesting that every facet of schooling is a candidate for planned change. Switch the metaphor to farming, he says, and schooling looks very different. In agriculture you start with an ancient, stable process and build your efforts around the sun, climate,seeds, plants,and what insects are likely to do.By understanding the durability and limits to the process you can improve production, he argues. But you cannot, he continues, ignore these "older organic forces you have little control over." You have to work through them. This is a fundamentally different way of viewing teaching and has tangible consequences for what can and cannot be done with and for classroom teachers.[7]

I believe that many school officials, policymakers,and researchers carry these or similar images in their heads. Such pictures shape their decisions. Historical maps of teaching practices over the last century carry, at the least, potential for determining the accuracy of these metaphors and, in turn, suggest directions for the persistent reforms undertaken by citizens and professionals alike. I take up this point again and other ones in the final section.

Two specific questions guide this study:

.Did teacher-centered instruction perservere in public schools during and after reform movements that had as one of their targets installing student-centered instruction?

.If the answer is yes, to what extent did it persist and why? If the answer is no, to what extent did instruction change and why?

In order to answer these questions I have drawn historical maps of teacher classroom practices in three cities and many rural districts during the 1920s and 1930s; in two cities and one state for the decade between 1965-1975; and one middle-size school district in a metropolitan area between 1975-1981. The two periods when reformers tried vigorously to install student-centered teaching practices were the progressive years in the early decades of this century and the more recent, albeit briefer, period when informal learning and open classrooms captured the enthusiasm of both professionals and citizens.

To determine how teachers taught, I have used a variety of sources:

.photographs of teachers and students in class,

.textbooks and tests teachers used,

.student recollections of their experiences in classrooms,

.teacher reports of how they taught,

.reports from persons who visited classrooms,e.g. journalists, parents, and administrators,etc.,

.student writings in school newspapers and yearbooks,

.research studies of teacher behavior in classrooms.

.descriptions of classroom architecture, size of rooms, desk design and placement, building plans, etc.

From these sources I have gathered descriptions of over 1200 classrooms for the years 1890 to 1980. These descriptions will be embedded within a larger set of data from each district including studies of teachers, and other sources that indirectly reveal classroom practices. In addition, I included national data on how teachers taught in order to give a context for the local practices that I describe.

The patterns of teaching practice described in this study, the historical maps I mentioned earlier, only represent a tiny fraction of what teachers did in classrooms. Anyone passingly familiar with a classroom knows the kaleidoscopic whirl that it is although its pace, intensity and complexity are often obscured by student compliance and by routines that the teacher establishes. To the infrequent observer, the classroom, after thirty minutes, may seem humdrum, even tedious. How, then, can I capture only one slice of this whirl after it has disappeared?

The historian of classroom teaching is in the same bind as the paleanthropologist who carefully and softly brushes away the dust from a jaw fragment of an apparent human ancestor. The bone is an infinitesimally small fragment of the skeleton; the skeleton an even tinier fraction of the population that the scientist wants to describe. The "bones" I have had to deal with are photographs and written accounts of various participants. Capturing what happened in a classroom after it occurred is similar, but not identical to the paleanthropolgist 's search for relevant evidence.[8]

Historian David Fischer suggests another metaphor. History is like trying to complete an unconventional puzzle.Take a Jackson Pollock painting, cut it into a puzzle with thousands of parts. Throw out the corner pieces, most of the edges, and half of the rest. The task of putting it all together approximates what historians do.[9]

The study is divided into three sections. Section I covering 1900-1940 includes three chapters. Chapter 1 opens with a description of teaching in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries taken from both primary and secondary sources. The progressive reforms of these years are included. This description is followed by a chapter of case studies on New York City, Denver, Colorado, and Washington,D.C., during the 1920s and 1930s. Chapter 3 surveys teaching practices nationally during these two decades, including rural schools. Section II treats the one decade between 1965-1975. In it, case studies of Washington,D.C., New York City, and North Dakota are summarized. The final section on classroom practices since 1975 offers an intensive look at classroom teaching in one school district employing over one thousand teachers. The concluding chapter in this section is an essay on continuity and change in teaching during this century.

Earlier I compared my task to that of fossil seekers. Let me shift crafts to that of the thirteenth century cartographer trying to map a new world on the basis of what information seafarers brought back, what had been written in books, and what informed guesses revealed. The maps he produced contained plenty of mistakes yet sea captains who used them explored the seas and returned with new information that reshaped subsequent maps. This study is in the tradition of that thirteenth century mapmaker.

NOTES

[1] "Interview with Albert Shanker," Principal, Vol. 53, No. 3, March/April, 1974, p.48.

[2] Larry Cuban, "Determinants of Curriculum Change and Stability, 1870-1970," in Jon Schaffarzick and Gary Sykes (eds.) Value Conflicts and Curriculum Issues (Berkeley, Calif.: McCutchan Publishers, 1979.

[3] The writers who argue for stability often cite John Goodlad's study. These researchers drew conclusions based upon observations in the late 1960s of 158 classrooms in 67 schools across the nation. See Looking Behind the Classroom Door (Worthington, Ohio: Charles A. Jones, 1974). Writers who assert that progressive theories have penetrated the classroom include Lawrence Cremin, Transformation of the School (New York: Vintage 1961) and Charles Silberman, Crisis in the Classroom (New York: Random House, 1971). Other investigators have asserted that the instructional practices proposed by reformers did not get past the classroom door. See David Tyack, The One Best System (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974) and Theodore Sizer, Places for Learning, Places for Joy (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973). One writer who did investigate what happened in schools during the 1930s was Arthur Zilversmit, "The Failure of Progressive Education, 1920-1940," in Lawrence Stone, (ed.) Schooling and Society (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1976), pp. 252-261. In Chapter 1, what historians have written about student-centered classrooms penetrating classrooms is taken up in more detail.

[4] For the nineteenth century Barbara Finklstein has done a signal service by researching teacher autobiographies, student recollections, textbooks, teaching manuals, and the like for primary school instruction. Other than journal articles she has published based upon her doctoral research this line of investigation has interested few researchers. See Barbara Finkelstein, "Governing the Young: Teacher Behavior in American Primary Schools, 1820-1880," (Unpublished Ed.D Dissertation, Teachers College Columbia University, 1970

I cannot fully explain why so few researchers have tried to recapture what happened in classrooms other than the difficulty or the tediousness of the task, which, I suspect, is a partial explanation.The typical researcher, as Dan Lortie has pointed out, "has concentrated on learning rather than teaching and has generally employed models and techniques at some distance removed from the realities of the classroom." Dan Lortie, Schoolteacher (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975) p. 70.

Consider that the major policy study of the mid-1960s concentrated upon facilities available to students and used standardized test results as the basis for determining whether schools were effective. Far removed from classrooms, the Coleman Report, nonetheless, had profound consequences for both the public view of schooling, practitioners' aspiration for their students, and channeling research initially away from classrooms.

Where research has dwelt on teaching, it has been more fascinated with proving one method better than another--to no avail; or promoting one observational instrument over another. While those traditions of research are undergoing important changes now few investigators have examined exactly that teachers have done in classrooms. David Berliner in a thoughtful comprehensive review of problems researchers need to be aware of in investigating elementary classrooms stressed that "until we know more about what teacher behavior fluctuates and how and ... why it fluctuates over time relating teaching behavior to student outcomes must remain primitive." David Berliner, "Studying Instruction in the Elementary Classroom," in Robert Dreeben and Alan Thomas (eds.) The Analysis of Educational Productivity (Cambridge: Ballinger Publishing Co., 1980), p.202.
There is also a growing body of ethnographic literature on what happens in classrooms that has appeared over the last decade. I will cite some of these sources when I deal with the post-1965 years.

[5] I can illustrate this important point by a personal note. In the late 1950s when I began teaching social studies, an observer could have easily categorized me as wholly teacher-centered. Each week in class my students sat in rows of movable chairs with tablet arms; we carried on, more often than not, teacher-led discussions interspersed with mini-lectures from me, student reports, an occasional debate or class game to break the routine. Over ninety percent of the instructional time with students was spent with the whole group.

By the early 1960s I had begun to incorporate into my teaching practices such techniques as using student-led discussions, dividing the class into groups for varied tasks, preparing instructional materials to replace the textbook, and other approaches that could be summed up loosely as being part of the "new social studies."

By the early 1970s one class of the five I taught daily would spend the entire fifty minute period going from one teaching station to another. I used these stations at least once a week, sometimes more, depending on how much material I had developed for the teaching stations. Most of the week, however, was spent in teacher-led discussions, supervised study periods, group meetings for particular projects, student reports, mini-lectures, and other approaches. Students sat in a horseshoe arrangement of desks and chairs with the open end of the shoe facing my desk and the blackboard. What was studied, the methods used, how time and classroom space was allocated, I decided.

Again, if required to make a judgment about how I taught, my dominant pattern of instruction remained teacher-centered yet I had incorporated into my instruction certain practices not there a decade earlier.

I offer this personal reference to illustrate the point of how at least one teacher changed some practices, yet did not necessarily substantially alter a basic teaching pattern.

[6] The rationale for using these indicators is taken up in more detail in the Appendix.

[7] J.M. Stephens, The Process of Schooling (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), p.11. David Tyack pointed out to me that progressives Ellwood Cubberley and Franklin Bobbitt used both metaphors.

[8] Donald C. Johanson and Maitland A. Edey, Lucy. The Beginnings of Humankind (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981), p. 120.

[9] David H. Fischer, Historians' Fallacies (New York: Harper and Row, 1970) p. 134.

Chapter 1

TEACHING PRACTICE AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

At P.S. 8 in New York City, William Chatfield taught the sixth grade. While he taught many subjects, he enjoyed the teaching of history enough to submit an article to New York Teachers' Monographs, a journal that printed contributions from city teachers. A glimpse of how Chatfield taught his sixth graders history in 1900 emerges from his description. He wrote that the course of study for the second semester of the sixth grade covered the French and Indian War through the end of the War of 1812. Chatfield described how he included the main points of this half-century of American history and how he taught the subject matter.

> The general method has been to first furnish the pupils with an outline of the work to be covered and to assign lessons from the text in conformity with this, and then to lead them by conversations to discover the reasons and think out the results.
>
> A part of the time each week is given to oral instruction and at the end of the week a written exercise is required of each pupil. In this he attempts to show what he has gathered from the oral work, his reading and the text book.
>
> Maps and pictures are freely used to illustrate the work, the former being drawn upon the blackboard and copied by the pupil. Upon these maps are indicated the movements of the opposing forces; and brief statements are made of events which have made certain places and localities noted. The pictures are gathered from many sources and are distributed in the class....

Chatfield pointed out how he connected the climate and geography to "causes aiding or preventing certain results," and what people did for a living. Finally, to "leave a lasting impression, the principal events are memorized in chronological order."[1]

I know little else about William Chatfield. Or, for that matter, his thousands of colleagues across the city. Few historians know what happened in those classrooms. Much is known about school district governance, squabbles over schools, who taught and what was taught, yet very little is known of what teachers did in classrooms. The few historians who have researched practice prior to progressive reformers' involvement with public schools have reconstructed a partial picture of classroom activities from teacher biographies, student recollections, popular textbooks on methods, visitors' impressions, and the context within which teachers worked, i.e. class size, room arrangement, school organization, courses of study, or school board rules.[2]

Public schools near the turn of the century were diverse. For example, in 1890 there were 224,526 school buildings housing almost 13 million students in elementary (including grades seven and eight)[*] schools, and 222,000 in high schools. Together these students constituted 69% of the age 5-17 population. Over 77% of the children attended schoolhouses in rural areas, then defined as districts outside of towns and cities of 4000 or more people.[3]

By the 1890s over a half-century had already passed since the common school movement had begun its spread across the growing nation. Public schools, particularly in cities, had established organizations and practices that would be familiar to observers a century later. Schools were graded. School was in session nine months out of each year. Teachers were expected to have had some formal training beyond a grammar or high school education. Each teacher had a classrom to herself (by 1890, 65% of all primary and grammar school teachers were female; 60% of high school staffs were female). Rows of desks bolted to the floor faced a teacher's desk and blackboard. (Movable desks were introduced in the early 1900s but did not become commonplace until the mid-1930s.)[4] Courses of study set the boundaries and expectations for what had to be taught and when. Report cards and homework had already become standard features of the urban classroom in the 1890s. In brief, a terrain familiar to teachers and students today had been constructed a century earlier in urban classrooms.

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[*] Distinctions between primary (grades 1-4) and grammar (grades 5-8) schools were common at this time. I will use the word elementary to include both types of schools and those with grades 1-8.

But rural schools differed. By 1890, rural school boards spent $13.23 per pupil while city boards spent $28.87. In particular, one-room schoolhouses received less of everything. They were housed in older make-shift facilities with insufficient books, supplies, and equipment. In ungraded schools, teachers with little formal education themselves coped with five year olds and young adults simultaneously. Students attended school fewer weeks a year than their urban cousins. These schools, soon to become the object of a vigorous campaign for improvement through consolidation, were the sites where most Americans were taught the basics. By 1910 rural schools still enrolled 67% of all children; per pupil expenditure had increased to $26.13, but remained well below the $45.74 that city systems spent.[5]

What did teachers do in these urban and rural classrooms? Did teaching differ by setting? According to Barbara Finkelstein who examined almost one thousand descriptions of elementary school classrooms between 1820-1880 teachers talked a great deal. Students either recited passages from textbooks, worked at their desks on assignments, or listened to the teacher and classmates during the time set aside for instruction. Teachers assigned work and expected uniformity from students both in behavior and classwork. Teachers told students "when they should sit, when they should stand, when they should hang their coats, when they should turn their heads...." Students often entered and exited the room, rose and sat, wrote and spoke--as one. "North and south, east and west, in rural schools as well as urban schools," she concluded,

> ...teachers assigned lessons, asked questions and created

> standards of achievement designed to compel students to assimilate knowledge and practice skills in a particular fashion. It was a fashion dictated by the textbooks usually—and often with dogmatic determination.[6]

Finkelstein found three patterns of teaching in these elementary schools. The "Intellectual Overseer" assigned work, punished errors and had students memorize. The "Drillmaster" led students in unison through lessons requiring them to repeat content aloud. A third pattern, "Interpreter of Culture," she found only occasionally. Here the teacher would clarify ideas and explain content to children. She found less than a half-dozen descriptions of this instructional pattern.[7]

Documenting these patterns, she provides richly detailed accounts of monitorial schools established in cities by Joseph Lancaster and his followers in the 1820s, where group recitations and standarized behavior were routine and rural one-room schools, where individual students sat before the teacher on the recitation bench and raced through their memorized text selections in the few minutes they had with the teacher.

Consistently, Finkelstein stresses that the regularities in teaching behavior she found crossed geographical and organizational boundaries. The settings, she concluded, had little to do with what teachers did in their classrooms. Nor could she find much change over time. "One gets the impression," she writes, "that there was little linear change in the conduct of classrooms in the period from 1820 to 1880." Carl Kaestle, however, noted that there was less corporal punishment, more uniformity in texts, some grouping by ability, and more grading of levels in these decades.[8]

Other primary sources not included in her study support the existence of the Overseer and Drillmaster patterns. As with Finkelstein's study, identification and frequency of occurrence in these types cannot be determined. Articles written by New York City grammar school teachers in

1900, for example, describe how they taught composition, science, geography, and arithmetic. These accounts reveal reliance upon whole group instruction, drill, and recitation; uniformity in practice turns up repeatedly in the teachers' descriptions. There were, however, a sizable number of teachers who told how they used various materials in addition to the text, modified lessons to fit childrens' interests, and developed special topics for students to pursue, providing evidence for the Interpretator of Culture type though this is two decades after the period Finkelstein studied.[9]

Photographs of elementary school classrooms were posed since camera technology of the period required subjects to remain immobile twenty or more more seconds while film was exposed. Typically, they show rows of children with hands folded atop their desks staring into the camera with a teacher standing nearby. Activities appear occasionally. One Washington,D.C. photo shows twenty-seven children sitting at their desks, cheeks puffed up, ready for the teacher's command to blow on the pinwheeel that they are holding in both hands. In the vast majority of these photos the teacher is often the center of attention; sometimes a student under the watchful gaze of the teacher, demonstrates a point at the blackboard, recites a passage, or reads to the class. Exceptions could be seen, however, in a series of posed photos taken in 1899 in Washington,D.C. classrooms to portray the "New Education." In almost 300 prints of elementary teachers, nearly thirty show groups of students working with relief maps in geography, rabbits and squirrels for a lesson on rodents, watching a teacher carve into a cow's heart to show the parts of an organ, taking a trip to the zoo, and similar activities. The remaining 90% of the prints show students sitting in rows at their desks doing tasks uniformly at the teacher's direction.[10]

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Washington, D.C. Elementary Classroom, white school, 1900 (Library of Congress)

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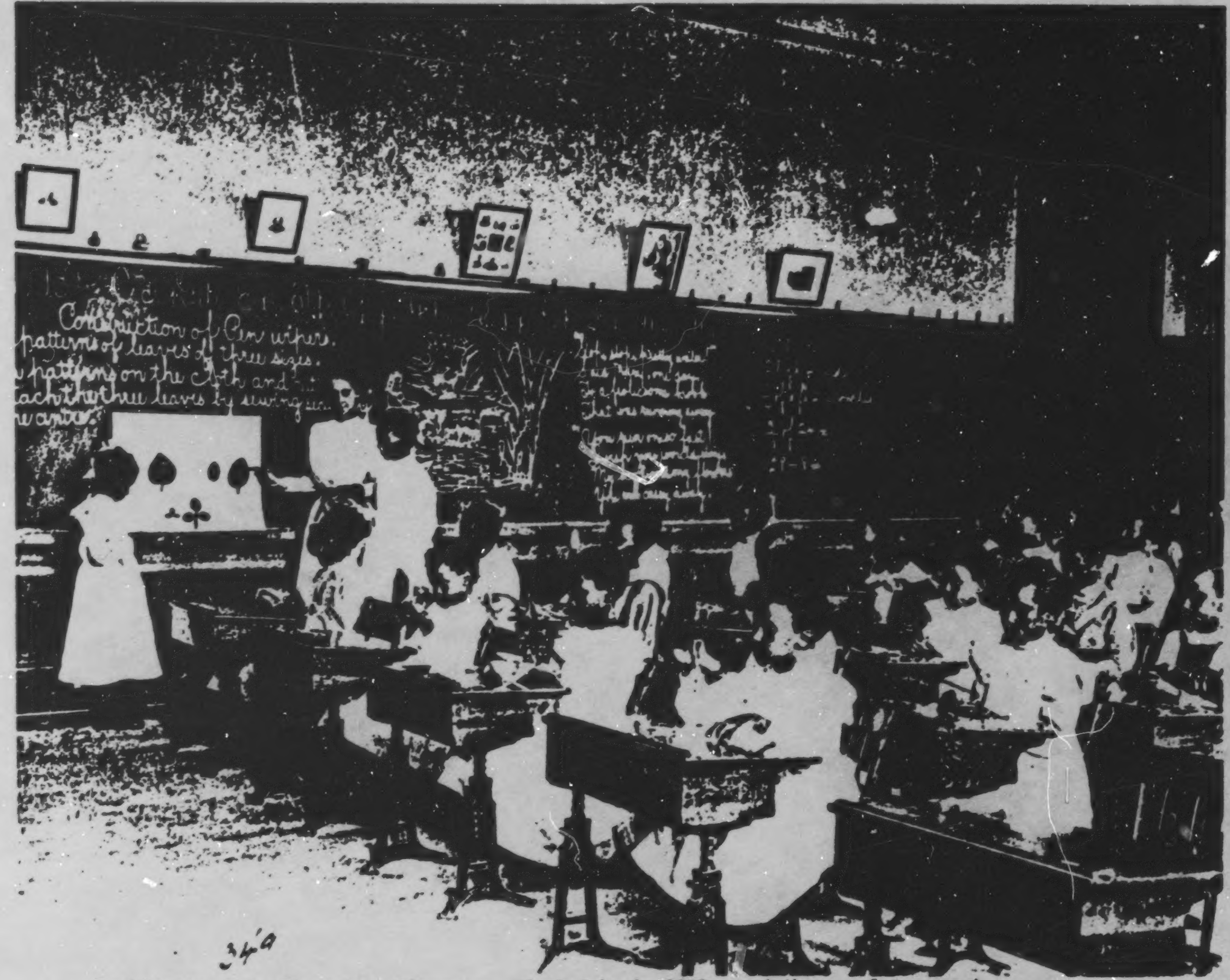
Construction of Pen wiper.
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Washington, D.C. Elementary Classroom, Black School, 1900 (Library of Congress)

Corroborating photographs and teacher descriptions further are the pen portraits of elementary classrooms drawn by Joseph Rice, the pediatrician-journalist who observed 1200 teachers in thirty-six cities during a six month period in 1892. Rice's articles in a popular magazine painted teaching in urban schools as grim, dreary, and mechanical, a favorite epithet of his. Instruction was married to drill and sing-song recitations, lacking sensitivity to children as individuals, Rice said.[11]

As a self-proclaimed reformer, he described in clear, if not painful detail, the deadening drill, memorization, and "busywork" students mindlessly pursued at the teacher's order. In Boston, Rice witnessed a teacher beginning the lesson with a question:

> 'With how many senses do we study geography?'
> 'With three senses: sight, hearing, and touch,' answered the pupils.
>
> The children were now told to turn to the map of North America in their geographies, and to begin with the capes on the eastern coast. When the map had been found each pupil placed his forefinger upon 'Cape Farewell,' and when the teacher said 'Start,' the pupils said in concert,'Cape Farewell,' and then ran their fingers down the map, calling out the names of each cape as it was touched.... After the pupils had named all the capes on the eastern coast of North America, beginning at the north and ending at the south, they were told to close their books. When the books had been closed, they ran their fingers down the cover and named from memory the capes in their order from north to south.
>
> 'How many senses are you using now?' the teacher asked.
> 'Two senses—touch and hearing,' answered the children. 12

In New York, Rice spoke with a principal about unquestioned obedience to the teacher's direction for order. Asking her whether the children in one classroom were allowed to turn their heads, the principal told Rice: "Why should they look behind them when the teacher is in front of them."[13]

In six months of school visits Rice found untrained teachers, unimaginative methods, and textbook-bound instruction in most classrooms except for a few cities that he extolled. I will return to these exceptions later in this chapter.

Other sources that support the existence of the teaching types that Finkelstein found are surveys of school conditions conducted by the educational experts of the day. Take, for example, the 1913 Portland, Oregon survey directed by Stanford professor Ellwood P.Cubberley. The survey team visited fifty elementary classes in nine schools. Except for teachers in the primary grades, the observers were highly critical of the instruction they viewed. Some excerpts:

> .geography: "All the work observed ... was abstract and bookish in the extreme.... The assignment for study and the questions, almost without exception, called for unreasoning memorization of the statements of the book."
>
> .arithmetic and grammar: "... the teaching of these subjects seemed on the whole, to be the best teaching observed. It is true that much of the technical grammar had little meaning for most of the children....
>
> .history: "There was not the slightest evidence of active interest in the subject; the one purpose seemed to be to acquire, by sheer force of memory, the statements of the assigned text...." [14]

Newton, (Mass.) Superintendent Frank Spaulding drafted the report on elementary instruction. "Passive, routine, clerical," he wrote, "are the terms that most fittingly describe the attitude of principals and grammar grade teachers toward their work." Except for one lesson "in all my visits to grammar-grade rooms, I heard not a single question asked by a pupil, not a single remark or comment made to indicate that the pupil had any really vital interest in the subject matter.[15]

While the survey report blamed a "mechanical system" of courses of study and quarterly examinations for suffocating imaginative teaching, there is a persistent problem in interpreting these survey conclusions. Often it is impossible to gauge precisely whether conclusions apply to all, the overwhelming majority, or most of the classrooms. Even more difficult is to disentangle the observers' desires for improvement from what they see.

Additional data buttressing Finkelstein's reconstruction of teaching practice comes from evidence found in various articles and books by educators of the period about teaching methods. Take, for example, Vivian Thayer's The Passing of the Recitation. A professor involved in efforts to make curriculum child-centered, his book traces the history of the recitation--a reform introduced initially to improve instruction--to its use in 1928 when the book was published.

Thayer pointed out how the child-centered ideas of Pestalozzi, as translated by his followers at places like the Oswego (N.Y.) Training School in the 1860s, were disseminated throughout the country. Yet within decades adherents of "object teaching" were being accused of "mechanizing instruction." Similarly, enthusiastic American followers of Johann Frederich Herbart took his description of how the child's mind worked and by the 1890s, according to Thayer, had converted these ideas into a "method of instruction which requires that children, in the acquisition of new knowledge, move in lock-step fashion through five steps in learning." Detailed lesson plans included precise actions to be taken by the teacher, devices for holding the class's attention and carefully crafted assignments. These planning techniques resulted from implementing Herbart's theories into classroom practice, Thayer observed; in classrooms such techniques centered even more attention, if not influence, upon the teacher.[16]

After summarizing the ideas of major nineteenth century pedagogical thinkers and their impact upon practice, particularly the recitation, Thayer concluded, that by the 1920s,

> ...the developments since Lancaster have led to little more than pouring of new wine into old bottles. We teach different subjects and we have altered the content of old subjects. We have originated more economical devices for learning and we have profited from careful

> studies in the technique of acquiring skill and information. We classify and grade our pupils more skillfully. But withal we have not fundamentally reconstructed the recitation system which Lancaster devised a little more than a century ago. 17

Different evidence drawn from the conditions within which teachers worked and their training is oblique and offers less direct support for the classroom practices that Finkelstein outlined. I enter these points now into the discussion in order to highlight linkages between what teachers do, the conditions under which they teach, and their training. I will return to these connections between context and practice later.

Urban classrooms had between 40 to 48 desks per room. These classrooms were constructed to house 40 to 60 students. Estimates of class size at the turn of the century are rough but suggest that few desks were long empty, especially in the rapidly growing cities of the northeast and midwest.To staff these crowded classrooms, teachers had to be found who would survive and stay. Yet teaching was an insecure job. Trustees decided each year whether or not the teacher would be rehired. Political and family ties played a large role in appointments. Moreover, the jobs demanded a great deal from applicants who often lacked advanced education.
Teachers, expected to cover up to ten subjects daily, often had limited training beyond their own grammar or high school education.

With a largely untrained corps of teachers expected to teach a variety of subjects and skills it comes as no surprise that textbooks flourished. By the 1880s textbooks had already become the teacher's primary tool and the student's main source of knowledge. Also published courses of study determined for teachers what had to be taught and when.These syllabi were often studded with page listings from textbooks for each subject. 19

Exactly how powerful these working conditions were in shaping how teachers organized their classrooms for instruction is difficult to estimate. That class size, prescribed texts and curriculum, and lack of training had some influence, however, is obvious in teachers pointing to these conditions as factors affecting their performance.

Were high school classrooms at the beginning of the twentieth century similar to those in elementary schools? To set a framework for answering the question some demographic information might help.

High School Classrooms

In 1890, just over 220,000 students attended 2526 high schools in the country for an average of 86 days a year although attendance varied by section of the country. A decade later, enrollment had increased sharply to 519,251 students in just over 6000 high schools. New schools were appearing at the average rate of one a day. Uncommon as it was for a seventeen year old to attend a high school, it was even more unusual for that teenager to graduate. Of the 200,000 who went to high school in 1890, representing one percent of the total population only 11% graduated. And of those who went to school and received diplomas, females consistently outnumbered males.[21]

High school teachers had more training and education than their grammar school colleagues. In New England, for example, where high schools began, 56% of the teachers were college graduates and 21% had done some work beyond high school. In Buffalo (N.Y.) of the 182 high school teachers in 1914, 72% had either graduated from college or a formal teacher training school.[22]

Additional schooling beyond high school was often necessary since teachers were called upon to teach many subjects.
Since half of the high schools enrolled less than one hundred students,

often one or two teachers taught the entire curriculum. Twenty-three of fifty-nine Connecticut high schools had one or two instructors to teach the complete course of study. Henry King of Albany, Missouri, to cite one case, was responsible for teaching botany, zoology, Latin, history, English, etymology, and arithmetic. In city high schools, enrollments were larger and faculties were organized into departments by the early twentieth century.[23]

The curriculum was geared to prepare students for college in the late nineteenth century. In 1893, 44% of high school students took Latin; 56% took Algebra. In 1900, most students enrolled in English, U.S. and English history, algebra, geometry, Latin, earth science, and physiology. College entrance exams shaped the course of study and activities as much as the rhythm of the school year.[24]

And teaching? If few historians studied elementary classrooms at this time, none has yet examined secondary ones. Clues do appear in pictures of classrooms with row after row of bolted-down desks; rooms in rooms in newly-built schools set aside for "recitation;" and master schedules with the major portion of time allotted to this formal activity. Beyond these contextual clues, little is known about what happened in these classrooms. Since the the major focus of this study is in the period after 1920 I can only offer a few fragments of evidence that may suggest a partial picture of practice. The subject deserves a full study.

Consider Steele High School in Dayton, Ohio in 1896. The city's only high school or "people's college" was the subject of a detailed report by Malcolm Booth at the end of his first year as principal. Submitted to Superintendent W.J. White, Booth's report sketches out the teaching

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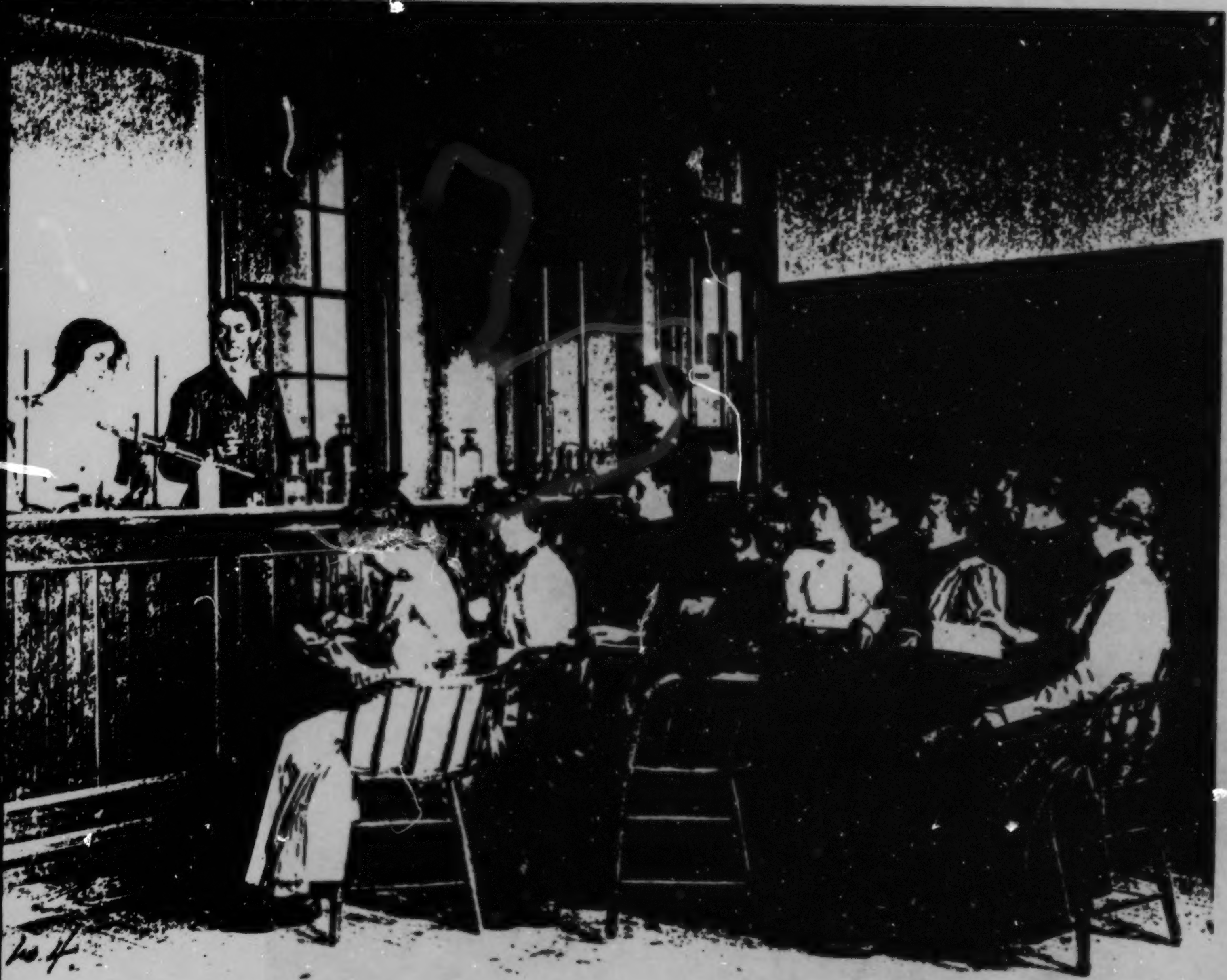

Washington, D.C. High School, White, Science Lesson, 1900 (Library of Congress)

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conditions at Steele and what teachers reported they did in classrooms.

Steele High School enrolled 846 students (60% female) in 1895-1896, an academic year lasting thirty-six weeks, a month shorter than the previous year. The 1896 graduating class had 92 students (71% female). For the first time the high school was open from 8:30 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. instead of two daily sessions. The school day was divided into six periods of forty-one minutes each, running back-to-back except for a fifteen minute recess between 11:18-11:33.[25]

The curriculum contained four courses of study (Classical, Scientific, English and Commercial) covering four years. The content of each course was outlined in the principal's report including the textbooks used, assignments, and what was expected of the students. To teach over twenty-five required courses to over 800 students there were twenty-six teachers (38% female). They taught six periods daily (with about thirty students in each class). These six classes seldom meant teaching the same lesson six times. While Mr. Kincaid in the Classical Department, for example, taught only two subjects- Latin and Greek, he probably had five different lessons to teach daily: Senior Latin, Junior Latin, Second Year Greek, First Year Latin, and Junior Greek. Each class had different texts and requirements. Also each class—take Junior Greek—included in the "Outline of Courses of Study" the notation "(5)" which meant that Mr. Kincaid was expected to hold five "recitations per week."[26]

To teach botany, physiology, geometry, Latin, Greek, and advanced German demanded schooling beyond the grammar grades. Fifty-four percent of Steele's faculty had graduated from college;fifteen percent had attended either normal school or college; the rest had finished high school.[27]

Turning to the classroom, some hints of what occurred during the forty-one minute period surfaced in course descriptions that teachers submitted to the principal. English teacher Charles Loos, an 1869 graduate of Bethany (W.Va) college, eight year veteran at Steele, and one of the three highest paid staff ($1500 a year) described the methods English teachers used to teach mythology to third and fourth year students:

> The myths are to be studied at home and recited topically, none being omitted or left to careless reading.... The myths must be reproduced as exercises in narration, comparison, and description.... This study is to be accompanied by constant exercise in composition, both written and oral, with special emphasis upon good sentence structure and pronunciation. [28]

In teaching the novel, Loos and other English teachers planned the following:

> In recitation the class must be prepared to give an outline of the part studied and show its connection with what has preceded; to discuss the characters as they appear, show how they affect other characters and the plot in general....
>
> The recitation should cover oral and written reports, rapid questioning, informal discussion and the reading aloud of certain illustrative passages. [29]

Physics and botany teacher August Foerste, Harvard Ph.D (1890), and appointed to Steele in 1893, wrote Booth that science instruction had improved with the Board of Education's recent purchase of equipment.

> With this apparatus it was possible for the teacher to perform, in the presence of the class, most of the experiments mentioned in the book. The pupils were required to make notes during the the experiment, and then to describe it at length in their note book. [30]

Foerste urged the purchase of more equipment so that students could do work individually and create projects such as "an electric bell and burglar alarm, a telegraph sounder and relay, and a telephone" so that students do "practical application of physical laws." These ideas, he said, "are not wild." It is not essential for the "pupil to be a skilled mechanic in order to make them a success educationally (original emphasis). This teacher's concern for practical application of knowledge and projects worked on by individual students was unique in the reports submitted to the principal.[31]

Although Marie Durst, at Steele for eight years, included in her report on French and German a concern for daily usuage of language she said that "most of the classes in modern languages are too large. The teacher has no opportunity for giving any individual attention." As to method, instruction is given in the language to be taught and "the pupils are led to express themselves in that language as soon as they have acquired a sufficient vocabulary." For grammar and translation, Durst used dictation frequently since "they train the ear to the strange sounds and require the strictest attention. " Also, she added, students learn correct pronunciation and fluent speech by "memorizing and reciting selections of high literary merit."[32]

Such reports reveal teacher intentions and, in various portions, describe practice. No verification of what happened in their classes is available. A decade later, in another city, however, a professor did sit in classes and reported what she saw and heard. Romiett Stevens visited an unspecified number of schools in and around New York City between 1907-1911 to study the use of questions in classrooms. Using a stopwatch and a stenographer she observed 100 English, history, math, foreign language, and science teachers that principals had identified as superior. She recorded the number of questions that they asked. In a related study, she followed ten classes through each period of the day to get a sense of the aggregate impact of teacher questioning.[33]

Stevens found that teachers asked an average of two to three questions per minute; the average number of questions that students faced daily totaled 395. The lowest number of questions she found in her observations of 100 classrooms was twenty-five; the highest, 200. "The teacher," she commented, "who has acquired the habit of conducting recitations at the rate of from one hundred to two hundred questions and answers per classroom period of forty-five minutes has truly assumed the pace that kills." Of the 100 teachers she visited, twenty-eight asked questions at that pace.[34]

With teacher questioning dominant, Stevens calculated exactly how much time during a lesson was devoted to teacher and student talk. Using twenty stenographic reports, she found that teachers were talking 64% of the time. Of the 36% of talk that belonged to students, much of it was brief, usually one word responses or short sentences. There were exceptions. Stevens found two of the one hundred classrooms she observed unusual. Of the 34 questions asked in one science class, 25 came from students. In a history lesson, the teacher let the students use the textbook while the class answered questions. General practice, according to Stevens, was to close the text and put it away once the teacher began asking questions.[35]

Stevens' writing reveals a distaste for rapid-fire teacher questioning where the "pupils follow as a body, or drop by the wayside." To ask between two to three questions a minute, "we commit ourselves as 'drivers' of youth instead of 'leaders,'" she wrote. With teachers assigning lessons for the next day, students taking the book home to memorize the lesson, and the next day teachers telling students to close their books and recite answers from the the pages read--Stevens concluded that teachers were "drillmasters instead of educators."[36]

Three years after Stevens' study was published, a survey of Buffalo (N.Y.)schools was completed by the New York State Commissioner of Education's staff at the request of the city superintendent. A portion of that report deals with high schools.

In 1914, Buffalo had four high schools with 182 teachers."Inspectors," as the members of the survey team were called, visited classrooms of all teachers and reported their conclusions in narrative form. Some excerpts suggest patterns although specific figures are missing in the report. Of the twenty-five English teachers who were each visited three times for at least fifteen minutes on each occasion, the inspectors reported on the teaching of grammar.

> Instruction in grammar is usually much too detailed and formal. It is composed largely of such work as copying, composing, and correcting short illustrative sentences, selecting single types of constructions from sentences frequently too easy for the pupil, completing elliptical sentences, memorizing terms and definitions, diagramming and parsing in routine fashion. 37

For the twenty-three modern language teachers (Spanish, French, and German), the inspectors observed that "the usual method was to have one pupil read a paragraph, then to put a few simple questions to him about the part read, then to ask for forms and explanations of syntax." The survey team concluded that assignments were often ambiguous and recitations were poorly delivered, except for four teachers whom they praised. "Usually the teacher sat uncomfortably behind her desk and let the pupils answer the questions."[38]

State Department officials observed thirty-two math teachers. Recitation, again, was the primary teaching method. Most math teachers, the report stated, "called on most of the pupils for some part of the recitation." Inspectors criticized math instruction in the four high schools for giving insufficient attention to preparing students for the new work of the next day.[39]

Science teaching impressed the inspectors. Student time in the classes of the fifteen teachers was divided between laboratory and recitations. In labs, students worked on completing exercises using equipment and facilities that the observers felt were adequate. "There was little evidence," their report said, "of slavish following of directions...." For recitations, the "questioning was well calculated to test both the memory of a statement and ability to apply the definitions and principles." In two classes, student reports consumed the lesson. "This appeared to be the habitual practice," they reported. In other classes student responsibility was less defined "with the result that the recitation became a lecture punctuated by occasional questions." In a number of classes the work was carried on with "splendid enthusiasm."[40]

History instruction was also viewed favorably by the team of observers. Except for the minority (number unspecified) whose teaching is "formal and mechanical" because they limit themselves to the text, required readings and notebook work, the majority of "skillful" teachers use maps, field trips, discussions, debates, and other subjects in the curriculum to make history "vivid and interesting."[41]

Such evidence drawn from surveys, reports, visitors' impressions, and photographs is piecemeal. It is suggestive, not comprehensive. A complete study of high school instruction would, I believe, fill in the gaps and include the finer lines that go into a full portrait of teaching. Yet even with this broad outline teaching patterns emerge from the unorderly jigsaw pieces presented here.

When elementary and high school instruction are taken together, similarities appear. Generally, classes were taught as a group. Teacher talk dominated verbal expression during class time. Student movement during instruction occurred only with the teacher's permission. Classroom activities clustered around teacher questions and explanations, student recitation, and the class working on textbook assignments. Uniformity in behavior was sought and reflected in classroom after classroom with rows of bolted-down desks facing the blackboard and the teacher's desk.

There were also differences between the two levels of instruction at the turn of the century as today. Subject matter was stressed far more in the higher than in lower grades. Teaching was splintered in high schools, that is,students traveled from class to class to meet with different teachers for about an hour at a time. Not so at the elementary school where the teacher generally would spend the day with the same students. Classes in high schools were smaller than in elementary schools and high school teachers had more schooling than their colleagues in the lower grades.

Taking the similarities and differences together, teacher-centered instruction, as defined by the categories listed above, clearly dominated the instances of instruction that appear in the evidence I offered here.

Student-centered Instruction

Where were the concepts of student-centered instruction practiced in the public schools at the turn of the century? Two forms existed.A common-sense, atheoretical, practical version appeared in rural one-room schools due, in large part, to the conditions existing in those settings. The lack of materials, isolation, group feeling engendered by an intuitively flexible teacher produced classrooms that permitted cooperative work, individual attention, use of content drawn from the community, and tolerance of student movement. The other more prominent and theoretical form were the innovative efforts tried in small, mostly private, schools.

The origins of this latter form can be traced back to Rousseau's Emile as elaborated further by educational reformers Froebel and Pestalozzi. In America the conversion of these reformers' ideas into schools that viewed the child, not the teacher or subject, as the proper focus for instruction, can be found in the work of Edward Sheldon, Francis Parker, John Dewey, and their earnest disciples who spread interpretations of each man's work throughout the country. No one definition of student-centered instruction or the "New Education" nor progressivism bound these men together other than the conviction that schools could do a far better job of linking a child's life inside the classroom to the world outside the schoolhouse door.

The point of reviewing, however briefly, the work of Sheldon, Parker, and Dewey is to establish that varied concepts of student-centered instruction were practiced in schools operated by these men and their followers throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Edward Sheldon, teacher of orphans in ragged" schools, secretary and organizer of a public school system, fervently embraced Pestalozzi's ideas, as translated by the English Home and Colonial Infant Society. "Object teaching," as Pestalozzian principles in the hands of Sheldon and others came to be labeled, concentrated upon the experience of children, their perceptions, and language in order to develop in an orderly manner their powers of reasoning. A child's experience was supposed to replace books; how a child developed was to replace courses of study; and the teacher's careful direction of instruction was to replace recitation.[42]

Object teaching, according to two writers, penetrated magazines, books, conferences on teaching, reports and courses of study at the elementary level, especially in arithmetic, oral instruction, geography, and natural science. In classrooms, however, object teaching became in Thayer's phrase, "dismal formalism." Reprints of actual lessons reveal teachers asking questions about objects, adding little knowledge to the students, and controlling the entire pace, structure, and outcomes of the lesson. Examples of lessons used as the Oswego State Normal and Training School contained specific points that teachers were expected to make with classes, clear instructions of how to lead students to correct observations. If anything, these instructions resemble scripts.[43]

While object teaching was still in evidence by 1900, it was often indistinguishable from the dreary, tedious recitations that Rice and other school critics condemned. Nonetheless, the ideas about children's development and expression underlying object teaching had had an impact. Perhaps that may explain the letter Sheldon received in 1886 from the principal of the Cook County Normal School. Francis Wayland Parker. "You," Parker wrote, "touched every child in America." Strong praise, indeed, from the person John Dewey called the "Father of Progressivism." Parker had taught in country schools. During the Civil War he served in the Union Army, was seriously wounded in the throat, and rose to rank of Colonel.[44]

Returning to teaching he soon became principal of a Normal School in Ohio. His wife died shortly thereafter. Using a trust fund that a relative had left him, he went to Europe to study both philosophy and pedagogy. Coming back to America he could not find a position until School Board President Charles Francis Adams invited him to Quincy (Mass.).

In the years he served Quincy, a school system with forty teachers and 1600 students in seven schools including a high school, Parker rapidly changed the curriculum, methods of instruction, and materials. Within a few years Quincy became a Mecca for educators interested in the "New Education," as one admirer of Parker called it. Parker disclaimed any innovation saying:

> I repeat that I am simply trying to apply well established principles, principles derived directly from the laws of the mind. The methods springing from them are found in the development of every child. They are used everywhere except in school. I have introduced no new method or detail. No experiments have been tried, and there is no peculiar 'Quincy System.' 45

Perhaps. But John Dewey in a speech on Parker's work in Quincy asked: "Did you ever hear of a man, who starting as superintendent of schools had reached a point in his career twenty-five years later where the anniversary of that beginning was an event to be marked by the educators of the nation?"[46]

Parker went on to serve as principal of the Cook County Normal School which eventually became part of the University of Chicago. He served as principal and director for almost two decades before he died in 1902. In the "Practice School" Parker and his staff, many of whom were graduates of the Oswego Normal School, developed further ideas and instructional and curricular techniques that implemented the Colonel's often quoted sentence: "The child is the center of all education."[47]

In the 1880s the eight grade school had a kindergarten, library, printing plant to provide classroom materials and to publish teacher-written units, physical education equipment, manual training, and twenty acres of nearby land that became a center for nature study. Parker believed in integrating ("correlation" was the word used then) the various subject areas. Children seeing connections between science, art, math, geography and being able to express these connections became one of the primary aims and achievements of the school. Beyond linking subjects,teaching basic skills through integrated content, and heavy reliance upon expression through art, music, and drama--the school also taught cooking, sewing, pottery-making, weaving, gardening and bookbinding.[48]

When a veteran school superintendent visited classrooms in the Normal School in 1892 he went away impressed by how easily and without any overt coercion students did what practitioners called "busywork" in public schools. Superintendent J. W. Greenwood of Kansas City saw no fear of the teacher in children. No copying occurred. The work was done rapidly, without any apparent order. Each student "goes at it in a hurry and rushes 'his job' along. It is the kindergarten idea carried up through the grades." In the upper grades, Greenwood observed practices that were similar to laboratory work, "each keeping a record of his own experiments." The grim uniform recitation with which the Kansas City school chief was familiar was absent from Parker's school. He, like thousands of visitors including the peripatetic pediatrician Joseph Rice, went away quite taken with the Colonel's achievements.[49]

When Parker died in 1902 memorial services were held at the University of Chicago. John Dewey spoke.

> Twenty-five years ago, in Quincy, Massachusetts the work he undertook was the object of derision....To many he seemed a faddist, a fanatic. It was only twenty-five years ago; and yet the things for which he then stood are taken today almost as a matter of course, without debate, in all the best schools of the country.

Dewey knew Parker well. When Dewey moved his family to Chicago in 1894, he enrolled his son, Fred, in the first grade of the Practice School. The next year, Fred's sister Evelyn attended the school. When Dewey and his wife began an experimental school, they took their children out of Parker's school and entered them into their new Laboratory School at the University of Chicago.[50]

Far more has been written about Dewey than Sheldon and Parker. Rather than trying to recapture the essence of his Dewey's career as an influential theorist and practitioner, a task others have done, I will mention briefly the years 1896-1903 when he served as Director of the experimental school. In the Laboratory School he worked directly with children, teachers, and parents implementing his ideas of learning and child development into classroom practice.

In reading through teacher recollections, courses of study, teacher reports, students' remembrances it is easy to conclude that the Laboratory School with its curriculum centered upon Man's occupation rather than separate subjects; upon reading and writing learned through activities rather than through isolated tasks, and group activities guided rather than directed by teachers were simply features of just another progressive school. That would be a mistake since in the 1890s there were few schools in the country, public or private, that risked shaping an entirely new curriculum around children's interest in adult work, family and community ties, group cooperation, and democratic practices--not for its own sake but toward larger goals. As a private school of 140 children (1900) and twenty-three teachers including Ella Flagg Young as Supervisor of Instruction, and later Chicago Superintendent of Schools, the Laboratory School was openly experimental, advancing ideas and trying innovations that would become familiar, if not cliches, a generation later.

Consider the first few months of school for Group III, the six year olds. Daily the class would gather and review the previous day's work and plan for the day, "each child being encouraged to contribute." The plans for the day's work were decided upon and delegated by the pupils. At the end of the period, another group meeting summarized the results of the work and suggested new plans. Projects determined and built by the children included a miniature farm house, barn and cultivated land made out of large blocks, twigs and soil. Plans were discussed and drawn up using rulers to make the model to scale. This group also cleaned up a five by ten foot space in the school yard to plant winter wheat. As they proceeded through the school year, the class discussed plowing, what seeds to plant, how to plant, harvesting and using the grain to make flour, and then making bread. "When they talked about grains in the classroom," a teacher wrote, "they cooked cereals in the kitchen." Measuring and other uses of numbers were easily incorporated into building the farm model and producing the winter wheat.[51]

During these first few months of school "an interest in reading also developed."

> All the things they had found in their outdoor excursions were placed on a table. Sentences were written on the board, such as: 'Find a cocoon,'

> and the child who could read it was allowed to run and get the cocoon. After playing this game a few times, the same sentences were shown printed in large type, so that they would get the printed form simultaneously with the script. They seemed very eager to read and decided themselves to make a weekly record of their work. [52]

For older students, the same focus upon active involvement, occupations, group discussion and decision-making with the teacher acting as a helper prevailed. The typical program for nine to twelve year olds was:

SUBJECT	HOURS A DAY	HOURS A WEEK
history and geography	1	5
techniques (reading, writing, numbers)	1/2	2 1/2
science or	1 1/2	2 or 2 1/2
cooking or		1 1/2
textile or shop		2
art		1 1/2
music	1 or 1/2	1 1/2
gymnasium		2 1/2
modern languages	1/2	2 1/2
	4 1/2	21 1/2

Opportunities to make decisions, use manual skills learned in classrooms, and to work cooperatively presented themselves, for example, in a schoolwide project of building a clubhouse where students in the Camera and Dewey (for debating and discussion) clubs could meet. Mayhew wrote that this "enterprise was the most thoroughly considered one ever undertaken by the school." Because it provided a home for clubs away from the main building "it drew together many groups and ages and performed a distinctly ethical and social service."[53]

Writing in 1930, former student Josephine Crane recalled what she learned at the Laboratory School.

> First as to the Sciences, no matter how young we were--too young to understand very much--we were given a chance to use our eyes, to observe facts of nature more closely....

> Secondly-the activities-carpentry, cooking, weaving, sewing, art—all trained our hands and fingers to be useful.... People have often asked me where I learned to use my hands, and how it is I so easily learn to do new things with my hands. I tell them it is because I was trained to use my mind and hands and eyes together. I was trained to observe and given a chance to use what I observed in what I did.
>
> Third, the building of the clubhouse—the real and practical work—helped us to see what architecture really is. We got far more out of that than out of books.
>
> Fourth, I learned responsibility. When I was quite young, I was asked to teach art for two months to a younger class.... When I went into the room for the first time I had to realize that I must do something! I learned how to teach that way and this is responsibility finally realized. 54

For teachers as well as students it was an exciting place to be. Grace Fulmer, a teacher at the Laboratory School who left to direct a similar school in Los Angeles, recalled her two years (1900-1902) working under John Dewey.

> It was Mr. Dewey's idea that each child should be free to develop his own powers to some ultimate purpose through the guidance of one whose experience was richer. Such also was his own relation to the teachers in his school. I know there were things in my own work of which he did not approve and yet I always felt free to work in my own ....

The Dewey School, as it was often called by teachers and friends, lost its namesake in 1904 when he accepted an appointment at Teachers College, Columbia University.[55]

Beyond the direct efforts of these men, there were public schools that partially or thoroughly implemented the "New Education" or "scientific pedagogy" as Rice and other enthusiasts labeled it. Writers who cite Rice for his description of mindless instruction often ignore his warm portraits of schools where the curriculum was correlated and where teachers introduced science work, encouraged children's expression in writing and art, and practiced manual training in the elementary school.[56]

From St. Paul,Minneapolis, Indianapolis, and La Porte (Indiana) Rice quoted liberally from student work and described teacher activities that unified the curriculum. In La Porte, for example, he found instances of the "perfect lesson." It is "one that not only interests the child, but one that uses his energies to the best advantage."

> From the start the pupils are encouraged to be helpful to each other. Already in the first school year the children begin to work together in groups and to assist each other in making and recording observations of plants and animals, of the wind and the weather.... In the classrooms are found small square tables around which the pupils sit, particularly when doing busy work, performing tasks in which all the members of the group take part....
>
> At the group tables things are made with which the rooms are decorated at the bi-monthly festivals which have become a custom at La Porte. Much of the number work is done at the group tables....

Rice conceded that such school districts were a minority in 1892. He found four school systems of the thirty-six he visited implementing the principles he advocated. Far more teachers stood and students sat in conventional recitation-bound classrooms, according to Rice.[57]

Just over two decades later John Dewey and his daughter Evelyn visited schools embracing progressive practices. In Schools of Tomorrow, the Deweys documented the spread of schools with "tendencies toward greater freedom and an identification of the child's school life with his environment and outlook, and even more important, the recognition of the role education must play in a democracy." While most of the schools they describe are private, the Deweys devote much space to the Gary (Indiana) schools under Superintendent William Wirt,* one public school

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* The Gary Schools during Wirt's tenure became a showplace of pre-World War I progressivism. Merging the impulse toward economy with the child-centered school impulse, Wirt created student communities out of schools through scheduling students into different spaces and activities within a building. Called platoon schools, Wirt's innovations, promoted by journalists and reformers, swept across the nation in the decade following its introduction in Gary. Because of the political controversy triggered by its abortive implementation in New York City in 1917, the Gary School Board and Superintendent asked a foundation to conduct an impartial survey of its schools. Directed by Abraham Flexner, the survey team inspected each of the innovations including classroom instruction and produced an eight volume report. The investigators visited 100 of the 121 classrooms in the system's nine schools. They spent at least one hour in about half of the classrooms and between two and three hours in the rest.

Finding much merit in the Gary Plan, Flexner did conclude, however, that classroom instruction in the academic subjects, primary grades through high school, was mechanical and, if anything, conventional. He singled out those teachers who correlated subjects student activities, and assignments in their teaching. Repeatedly, he stressed that such teachers were few.

> Primary instruction too rarely radiated from a central topic, from which were derived the materials for reading, spelling, language, arithmetic, handwork, dramatization, and even science and music.... it was more apt to be handled in separate compartments ... with the result that much of the primary teaching was mechanical and slow.

Elsewhere he observed that primary students were, "as a rule," divided into two groups, one reciting while the other worked at their desks or at the blackboard. The children working with the teacher gathered around her, as Flexner wrote, the "work was too frequently characterized by listlessness and indifference."

In arithmetic, few signs of the new methods were seen. For history and geography class time was split between silent reading and recitation. Lessons were assigned. Students read the pages silently. Recitation began with teacher, "book in hand," asking questions at the end of the textbook chapter or related ones. "The teacher usually added very little," Flexner commented, "there was little or no class discussion, outside reading was seldom required." While praising many portions of the Gary innovations, Flexner found classroom instruction "generally meager and formal." [58]

in Chicago (Howland) and two Indianapolis public schools, one of which served black students. Concentrating on themes where teachers encourage student expression, group work, and a close fit between the content studied and the immediate environment, the Deweys described a movement they believed was spreading across the nation. "More and more, " John Dewey wrote, "schools are growing up all over the country that are trying to work out definite educational ideas.[59]

Thus, various versions of teacher-centered and student-centered instruction existed at the turn of the century. The extent of each, their variations, and what impulses generated them cannot easily be determined although it would be reasonable to conclude that by 1915 when the Deweys' book appeared, the dominant practice in most public schools continued to cluster around teacher-centered patterns in furniture arrangment, grouping, instructional talk, student movement, and class activities. Variations of student-centered patterns appeared most often in small (less that 300 students), private (although public schools implementing these approaches did exist), elementary schools--few, if any, high schools were described.

Yet within a decade at different times and in different places, the vocabulary of student-centered instruction as put forward by diverse groups of pedagogical progressives rapidly turned into the conventional educational wisdom of the times as expressed by both teachers and administrators. The next chapter explores how conventional that wisdom had become in the the classrooms of urban and rural school districts in the 1920s and 1930s.

NOTES

[1] Sidney Marsden Fuerst (ed.), "Methods in New York Schools," New York Teachers Monographs, Vol. II (New York: June, 1900), pp. 106-107.

[2] Lawrence Cremin, Transformation of the School (New York: Vintage, 196[illegible]); Tyack, One Best System; Finkelstein, "Teacher Behavior in American Primary Schools."

[3] Report of the Commissioner of Education, 1890-1891, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), Vol. 1, p. 43 and Vol. 2, p. 792; 1900-1901 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1902), Vol. 1, p. xi; 1911, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1912), Vol. II, pp. xxvi, xxviii.

[4] Department of the Interior, Biennial Survey of Education, 1920-1922, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1924), Vol. I, pp. v, 2,4; Henry Eastman Bennett, "Fifty Years of School Seating, American School Board Journal, March, 1940, Vol. 100, pp. 41-43, 125.

[5] Report of the Commissioner of Education, 1911, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1912), Vol. II, p. xxix.

[6] Finkelstein, "Teacher Behavior, 1820-1880," pp. 22, 86.

[7] Barbara Finkelstein, "The Moral Dimensions of Pedagogy," American Studies, (Fall, 1974), pp. 81-82, 84.

[8] Finkelstein, "Teacher Behavior, 1820-1880," pp. 174-175, 179; Carl Kaestle, Pillars of the Republic (forthcoming).

[9] Fuerst, pp. 8, 132.

[10] The Frances Benjamin Johnson collection of photographs is lodged in the Library of Congress; other photos are reproduced in Tyack, One Best System and O.L. Davis,Jr. "Schools of the Past: A Treasury of Photographs" (Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1976).

[11] Joseph M. Rice, The Public School System of the United States (New York: Arno Press, 1969).

[12] Ibid., pp. 139-140.

[13]

Ibid., p. 32.

[14] Ibid., pp. 116, 118.

[15] Ibid., p. 119.

[16] V. T. Thayer, The Passing of the Recitation (Boston: D.C. Heath and Co., 1928), pp. 7, 9-12.

[17] Ibid., p. 12.

[18] John Folger and Charles Nam, Education of the American Population (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1967), pp. 84-85; Rice, 58-59, 76, 159-160.

[19] Report of the Educational Commission of the City of Chicago (1898) cited in William C. Bagley, "The Textbook and Methods of Teaching," National Society for the Study of Education, The Textbook in American Education, Part II, (Bloomington, Illinois: Public School Publishing Co., 1931), p. 8; see also various volumes of New York Teachers Monographs (1900-1904) in which teachers describe how they use syllabi.

[20] In Nancy Hoffman, Woman's "True" Profession (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981), see selection from Margaret Haley's speech to the National Education Association in 1904; selection from an anonymous teacher in Atlantic Monthly (July, 1896); and selection from Myra Kelly, Little Citizens.

[21] Ed Krug, The Shaping of the American High School, Vol. I, (New York: Harper and Row, 1954), pp. 5, 14, 169; Theodore Sizer, Secondary Schools at the Turn of the Century (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), pp. 5, 39, 53; Tyack, p. 576.

[22] Sizer, pp. 44, 46; Education Department of the State of New York, Examination of the Public School System of the City of Buffalo (Albany, New York: University of the State of New York, 1916), p. 55.

[23] Sizer, pp. 45, 53; see also Buffalo Survey.

[24] Sizer, p. 66; David Tyack, "The History of Secondary Schools in Delivering Social Services," Stanford University, June, 1978, p. 3.

[25] Dayton, Ohio Annual Report of the Board of Education, 1895-1896 (Dayton Board of Education, 1896), pp. 13, 49, insert after p. 250.

[26] Ibid., p. 250.

[27] Ibid., pp.13, insert after p. 250, 274.

[28] Ibid., pp. 58-59.

[29] Ibid., pp. 59-60.

[30] Ibid., p.64.

[31] Ibid., p.65.

[32] Ibid., pp.76-77.

[33] Romiett Stevens, The Question as a Measure of Efficiency in Instruction (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1912), Contributions to Education, No. 48.

[34] Ibid., pp.11, 15-17.

[35] Ibid.,p.11.

[36] Ibid., p.25.

[37] Buffalo Survey, p. 127.

[38] Ibid., pp.132-133.

[39] Ibid., p.134.

[40] Ibid., pp. 140-142.

[41] Ibid., p. 138.

[42] Thayer, p. 7.

[43] Thayer, pp.7-8; see Ned H. Dearborn, The Oswego Movement in American Education (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1925), pp. 159-169 for thirteen lessons taken from Sheldon's Elementary Instruction.

[44] Dearborn, p.97; Cremin, p. 129.

[45] Lelia E. Patridge, *The Quincy Methods* (New York: E.L. Kellogg and Co.,1889), p. 657; Jack Campbell, *The Children's Crusader: Colonel Francis W. Parker* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1967), p. 78; Cremin, p. 130, citing an 1879 report by Parker.

[46] Ida Heffron, *Francis W. Parker* (Los Angeles: Ivan Deach,Sr.,1934) p. 25.

[47] Charles Marler, "Colonel Francis W. Parker: Prophet of the 'New Education'" (Stanford University unpublished dissertation, 1965), p. 108; Campbell, p.119.

[48] Marler, p. 179; Campbell, pp. 130-132.

[49] Marler, citing a report from J.M. Greenwood, "A Visit to Colonel Parker's School in December, 1892."

[50] John Dewey,"In Memoriam, Colonel Wayland Parker," June, 1902 in *Elementary School Teacher and Course of Study*, Vol.II, pp. 704-708.

[51] Katherine Mayhew and Anna C. Edwards, *The Dewey School: The Laboratory School of the University of Chicago* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1936), pp. 80-84.

[52] Ibid., pp. 84-85.

[53] Ibid., pp.228-232.

[54] Ibid., p.405.

[55] Ibid., p.395.

[56] Rice, p.184.

[57] Ibid., pp.207,229.

[58] Abraham Flexner and Frank Bachman, *The Gary Schools* (New York: General Education Board,1918), pp. 77, 79, 80-83, 160; for long-term effects of Wirt's efforts, see W. Lynn McKinney and Ian Westbury, "Stability

and Change: The Public Schools of Gary, Indiana, 1940-1970," in William Reid and Decker Walker, (eds.) *Case Studies in Curriculum Change* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975).

[59] Evelyn Dewey and John Dewey, *Schools of Tomorrow* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1915), preface; also see Scott Nearing, *The New Education* (Chicago: Row, Peterson, and Co., 1915) and *Rainbow Promises of Progress in Education* (Institute for Public Service, 1917).

CHAPTER 2

BEHIND THE CLASSROOM DOOR IN THREE CITIES: 1920-1940

It was a large sunny room with ample windows letting in light to the rear and left. The window sill held potted plants, some of which had begun to flower. Just above the sill pasted to the window glass were drawings made by the children. Doors and the ledges above the blackboards held placards: "factors," "numerator," "denominator." Above the front blackboard in careful, neat script was written: SELF-CONTROL. On one door was posted the Declaration of Independence; on another one was the membership of the American Junior Red Cross, 1924.

This was Mrs. Spencer's fourth grade class. Forty-two children sat in rows, facing the teacher's desk and SELF-CONTROL, awaiting the teacher's direction. Fifteen bright children from 4A and 27 dull ones from 4B, according to Mrs. Spencer, made up her class. An arithmetic lesson was underway.

"Little helpers to the board," Mrs. Spencer directed. "George, Edith, Fred, Gertrude, each take two children who need helping." A dozen children arrayed themselves in groups of three around the room. "Begin at page 101 in your book and start with the first example. You others, in your seats, begin at page 115, example 4. Yes, you may talk to one another about your work." A quiet hum arose.

The teacher moved around the room helping individual students. After awhile she looked at her watch and announced: "The coaching period is over. To your seats." As the children scurried back to their seats and settled back, Mrs. Spencer went to the board and wrote

$$\begin{array}{r} 37\ 1/2 \\ -25\ 1/2 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

"Who can give me the least common denominator? Fanny? I called on you because you weren't paying attention. Well, then, Sam, you tell us. Ten, that's right. Now, then, Sam, what do we--oh, I hope you know it--what do we do next?" A long pause. A girl answers. "Oh, dear," says Mrs. Spencer, "there's a girl named Sam." A long pause. Finally the teacher accepted an answer from another student.

"The arithmetic period is over," she announced. "Keep your papers in your books. Your homework is example 2 on page 114: 117,799 divided by 3,648." Stephen, the nine year old sitting directly in front of the teacher's desk for reasons that the entire class knows, fidgeted in his seat. Mrs. Spencer asked him what is wrong.

"She keeps sticking her feet into my back," he says.

"Oh, dear, how dreadful! Such little tiny feet going right through a big thick bench right into your big strong back. I suppose you are too seriously hurt to go to Mr. Hazen's room and fetch me the map of Asia. You're not? Well, and you David, go and get the map of Europe from Miss Flynn." As if launched by a sling shot both boys were at the door. "Remember to say 'Please,'Mrs. Spencer said and turned to the class, "Always be---

"Polite,"they responded.

"Yes, always be polite, it's worthwhile, you'll find."
Looking around the room, she said: "Stretch up-deep breath-out-that's better."

"Take out your geographies and turn to the map of Asia. Page 185."

"Henry, what is Asia?"

"Asia-Asia--, "Henry grasped for an answer.

"Class?"

"Asia is a continent," they chorused.

"Well, what is the meaning of continent,Elsie,?"

"A continent is the largest division of land."

"Right, when I talk about a continent,what do I mean? I mean land."

Stephen came back with the map of Asia in hand and placed it expertly atop the ledge above the blackboard. "Thank you, Stephen, it looks fine."

Question followed question with occasional children going to the map to use a pointer. Recess came and went.

"Time for writing," Mrs. Spencer said. "Monitors pass the papers. Everyone up and straight and tall and do your very best. Write your names. Don't forget to end with the upstroke. Two or three forgot about the upward stroke last time. It's just as bad as coming to school with your clothes unbuttoned or your necktie off. Write these words." On the board, she wrote: mountain,camp, August, glove, song, thumb, itself. "Do your very best. We have only a week or two more before promotion day." Three girls sighed and covered their faces.

Pens scratched. Feet shuffled. Paper crumpled. Mrs. Spencer reviewed the words, asking certain students to spell the words without looking at their papers.

"Time for reading. And we are going to exchange readers with Miss Flynn's class. We shan't use our own readers today, but instead let's act out one of the stories. Let's do the Mad Tea Party. Who remembers it best?" The teacher chose four children. They knew the lines by heart and acted out the parts as only enthusiastic nine year olds could. "Fine. You were all good,"Mrs. Spencer said.

"Now we'll have a drill game on the word 'bring,'" Mrs. Spencer told[1] the class. The game brought the morning to a close.

The school in which Mrs. Spencer taught in 1924 had received city-wide notice and praise as a progressive school. Her principal believed her to be an exemplar of progressive teaching in his building. Although Agnes DeLima, the journalist who observed this class was a passionate advocate of child-centered schools similar to ones operated by Elizabeth Irwin, Felix Adler, and others, she described this fourth grade teacher sympathetically. Yet she felt that Mrs. Spencer and other teachers like her conducted sincere but colorless imitations of the private experimental schools. She believed that progressive classes in experimental schools would die if placed within public schools. Large class size, administrative indifference or hostility, and a generally negative attitude toward child-centered classrooms would kill such efforts. Who, then, were the progressives? Mrs. Spencer? Her building principal? Staff in the experimental schools? The problem, of course, is in the word itself. The ideas nested in "progressivism" were diverse and ambiguous, appealing strongly to dissimilar reformers in the decades bracketing World War I.

Historians Lawrence Cremin, Michael Katz, and David Tyack distinguished between various educational streams within the larger political movement. Among the educational reformers, for example, Tyack described the administrative progressives (e.g. Teachers College George Strayer, Stanford's Ellwood Cubberley, Superintendent Frank Spaulding) who used the latest concepts in scientific management to streamline the school district's organizational and instructional machinery. He distinguished these progressives from social reformers (e.g. George Counts, John Childs, Willard Beatty) who advocated using the schools as an instrument for national regeneration, and the pedagogical progressives (e.g. Francis Parker Flora Cooke, William Wirt, William H. Kilpatrick) who saw the child central to the school experience. Although substantial differences existed between, and among, the pedagogical reformers they all drew deeply from the well of John Dewey's ideas.[2]

I will concentrate on the changes in the classroom in the interwar period and the efforts of the pedagodical reformers. I shall not deal with administrative progressives, reconstructionists, and other reformers except to the extent that they tried to modify existing classroom instruction.

No uniformity marked these pedagogical reformers except for a common antipathy to "fixed grades in the schools, fixed rules for the children, and fixed furniture in the classroom." Between these child-centered school advocates deep and sharp differences surfaced in curriculum, instruction, degrees of choice open to children, the role and extent of art and play in the classroom, and a host of other issues.[3]

Given their strong, negative views of the public schools and despite the diversity of doctrines implicit in the practices they advocated, there remained a core consensus on what constituted a school focused upon children. For the most part pedagogical reformers wanted instruction and curriculum tailored to chlidren's interests; they wanted instruction to occur as often as possible in small groups or individually; they wanted programs that permitted children more freedom and creativity than existed in schools; they wanted school experiences connected to activities outside the classroom; and they wanted children to help shape the direction of their learning. The tangible signs of these impulses that bound philosophers, curriculum theorists, psychologists, and practitioners together were classrooms with movable furniture, provisioned with abundant instructional materials, active with children involved in projects, and traffic between the classroom and the larger community. These commonalities leave untouched cleavages over the project method, how much freedom a child should have in school, the teacher's role in setting goals, the amount of time spent on basic skills,etc. The commonalities, nonetheless, do suggest where in the classroom to look for changes in practice.

Between the hundreds of thousands of students these professors taught and the readers of their books, the thousands of newspaper and magazine articles written about the schools they or their followers directed, the hundreds of courses of study and textbooks that incorporated these ideas, and the scores of school systems that bought movable desks and chairs, their ideas seemed to touch schools across the nation. Time pronounced it to be so in 1938. "No classroom," the anonymous writer declared, "escaped its influence."[5]

Historians, however, disagree upon the degree of impact of those progressive ideas targeted upon the classroom. Of the dozen historians who have written about progressivism and schools at least six have dealt with the issue of changes in teaching practice. Lawrence Cremin and Joel Spring assert, for very different reasons, that teaching behavior changed.

Cremin cites the "Middletown" studies in 1925 and 1935 to illustrate how a conservative strain of progressivism in Muncie (Indiana) classrooms might have been typical of schools in the "pedagogical mainstream." Noting that for every Winnetka there were probably schools "that must have taught McGuffey and little else well into the thirties," he goes on to state that the reformers left unmistakable footprints in classrooms.

> The character of the classroom changed markedly, especially at the elementary level, as projects began to compete with recitations as standard pedagogical procedure. Students and teachers alike tended to be more active, more mobile, and more informal in their relationships with one another. 6

In Education and the Rise of the Corporate State, Joel Spring takes the ideas of Dewey, Kilpatrick and Colin Scott on group work and traces their direct path into classrooms. Spring isolates specific teaching methods: the "socialized recitation" where students assume the role of teacher and review the lesson by either leading the recitation, developing a group discussion or variations of each; the "project method" put forth by Kilpatrick as an intentional group activity that has a socially useful end; and other methods that generated student group activities in the classroom. To demonstrate impact upon the classrrom, Spring cites the abundance of articles on these methods, the books written by advocates of each, and the appearance of courses on these topics in teacher-education curricula. "Group learning experiences in the form of cooperative projects and socialized recitations," he concluded, "prepared the individual to be what David Riesman called in later years 'other directed.'"[7]

Dissent from these views of reformers' impact upon teaching practice comes from economists Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, and historians Michael Katz, David Tyack and Arthur Zilversmit. In Schooling in Capitalist America, Bowles and Gintis argue that a coalition of business leaders and liberal professionals spearheaded successful reforms that changed the public schools' administration and curriculum, for example, the comprehensive high school, standardized testing, ability grouping, vocational education, and the concentrating of authority in school professionals. However, they say, "the schools have changed little in substance" in the exchange between teachers and students. Because pedagogical reformers lacked popular support and avoided criticizing corporate capitalism, Bowles and Gintis argue, they "worked in vain for a humanistic and egalitarian education." No direct evidence of classroom instruction is offered except for what other researchers cited.[8]

Michael Katz argues in Class, Bureaucracy, and Schools that instructional reform stopped at the classroom door because the movement itself was essentially conservative in outlook and aimed at bureaucratic changes. Katz refers also to Middletown to support his arguments. He does acknowledge that historians cannot learn what happened in schools by studying what leading theorists wrote and said. Whether teaching changed during the progressive years, he said in 1971, cannot yet be answered by historians.[9]

David Tyack shares a similar perspective on the importance of bureaucracy in explaining the lack of change in teaching practice is. He surveyed progressive reform and its consequences, both anticipated and unanticipated, between 1890-1940. Distinguishing between the varied strains of progressivism, Tyack described the success administrative progressives had in changing the structure and governance of public schools. Coalitions of professors, superintendents, foundation executives, and lay reformers,possessing a vision of a "one best system" based upon scientific school management, changed the landscape of American schooling through the strategic use of formal surveys of school systems, writings, conferences, and close contact with different networks of influential educators. Reformers did seek to eliminate inefficient classroom practices such as a uniform course of study, whole group instruction,and formal recitation, according to Tyack.[10]

Using more primary sources on schools and classrooms than other researchers of this period, Tyack drew from city school surveys, teacher writings, newspaper articles, and autobiographies to conclude that the dreams of Dewey and his followers about exciting classrooms for children foundered on the very successes of the administrative progressives, especially in the cities.

> A gifted teacher in a one-room school house might alone turn her class into Dewey's model of social learning, but changing a large city system was more difficult for Dewey's ideas of democratic education demanded substantial autonomy on the part of teachers and children--an autonomy which ... teachers commonly lacked. Predictably, the call for a 'new education' in urban school systems often brought more, not less red tape and administration, more forms to fill out and committees to attend, more supervisors, new tests for children to take, new jargon for old ideas. The full expression of Dewey's ideal of democratic education required fundamental change in the hierarchial structure of schools--and that was hardly the wish of those administrative progressives and their allies who controlled urban education. 11

Arthur Zilversmit is the only historian thus far to focus upon classroom changes in order to determine how widespread progressive practices were in American elementary schools. His verdict: very little.[12]

Zilversmit relied upon three indicators of the acceptance of progressive pedagogy. First, he argued, the curriculum of pre-1940 teacher-training institutions should reasonably mirror the extent of instructional reform since a skilled, alert and knowledgable teacher is essential to a progressive classroom. Instead, he found in three national surveys of teacher-education curricula that progressive ideas had spread minimally through both normal and college training courses of study.

Second, Zilversmit investigated classroom furniture. Progressive educators took as a given the importance of movable desks and chairs for flexible seating and work space in classrooms, yet Zilversmit pointed out that in 1934 stationary school desks still accounted for almost forty percent of new desks sold, not to mention those millions of old desks firmly bolted to the floor.

A third sign of weak influence on school practice, according to Zilversmit, were the few specialists hired by school systems to promote mental health, i.e. social workers and school psychologists. Mental health of children, the commitment to the whole child, he argues, was a serious concern of progressive educators.

For the classroom itself, Zilversmit relied upon the Regents' Inquiry, an intensive evaluation of New York state schools between 1935-1938. Referring to two of the twelve volumes, he quotes extensively from each one's conclusions on the traditional instruction that evaluators found in urban, rural and suburban classrooms across the state. He concludes finally that progressive ideas of the child-centered school left few marks on elementary schools.[13]

For those who have written about these years when progressive vocabulary became the accepted language in educational discourse, opinion is divided on the question of impact of progressive ideas on the classroom. The evidence used is, sparse,leans heavily upon the Middletown research, and refers infrequently to classrooms and schools. Despite the paucity of data on classrooms, historians trying to assess the spread of progressive practices in classrooms often take an all-or-nothing approach, and, except for Zilversmit, ignore the critical point of the extent of penetration. A systematic look at particular districts' schools and classrooms might confirm or refute some of the arguments advanced thus far while suggesting new lines of research and providing a more solid base of knowledge of what teachers did do in classrooms.

This chapter contains case studies of three large school systems. All three districts had superintendents who made national reputations as strong leaders dedicated to improving schools. New York City and Denver were known for their progressive practices during the two decades between the wars. Although Washington,D.C. had a superintendent noted as an administrative progressive whose tenure spanned the entire period, the racially segregated school system was not noted for its pedagogical reforms. By examining evidence of teaching practice during a two-decade period of peak interest in and acceptance of progressive ideas, a sense of how much classrooms in school systems renowned for their administrative and instructional reforms may emerge.

NEW YORK CITY SCHOOLS

The numbers stagger the imagination; they intimidate. Imagining 683 schools, 36,000 teachers, and 1,000,000 children (1930) in one school district boggles the mind of anyone west of the Hudson River. Glossy annual reports of the system tried to capture the massiveness of the school operation with comparisons: the increase in children attending school between 1920 and 1921 equaled the number of students going to school in Nashville, Tennessee. If you lined up all the children, arms apart, they would stretch from New York to Toledo, Ohio. Or if the superintendent visited classrooms for ten minutes each, eight hours a day, five days a week, he would have done nothing else but observe each teacher once in three years.[14]

Size alone made New York's schools unique. Yet the school district's size should not obscure the rich history of tensions and resolutions of ethnic, religious, political, and class issues that were mirrored on a smaller scale in cities across the nation in the first half of the twentieth century. These varied issues in the school system's history have been described by a number of historians. I will not cover the same ground. My attention is on what teachers did in classrooms, a topic to which these researchers devoted little space.[15]

Some narrative, however, is necessary to set the stage for what Sol Cohen called the "ultimate triumph" in 1934 when the Public Education Association (PEA), a reformist cadre dedicated to transforming schools into child welfare institutions, saw "its conception of progressivism in school principles and procedures capture New York City school officialdom."[16]

Between 1898-1940, the largest public school system in the country had four superintendents to cope with social changes that schools could only adjust to, not alter: massive growth in school enrollment; sharply increased ethnic diversity; and, after 1930, cutbacks in salaries, positions, and programs resulting from the Depression and World War II.

Enrollment growth and diversity taxed the ingenuity, skills, and stamina of William Maxwell who served as the first superintendent of the consolidated five borough district for twenty years. As a pragmatic school reformer who organized a bureaucracy while retaining interest in the "New Education" he had to cope with such basic needs as providing a seat for every student so that the schools could reach out, through the child, to improve the community. His adroit tenacity, vigor, and persistence left a string of accomplishments that contemporaries recognized: more uniformity in curriculum and instruction than had existed ever before; more schools to house students, expanded social services, after school and summer programs, broader curriculum, and key administrative initiatives (e.g. Board of Examiners) that indelibly marked organizational routines for years to come. Combining the administrative progressives' passion for uniformity with concern for classroom practice, Maxwell cast a long shadow that few of his successors could escape, even if they were so inclined—and none seemed to be.[17]

The three superintendents who followed Maxwell came up through the ranks as teacher, principal, district superintendent and associate superintendent. In the latter position, each became a member of the Board of Superintendents, a body that advised the Superintendent on personnel and program recommendations to the Board of Education. Each person that assumed the top post had sat in every key chair in the system as he rose through the ranks.

William Ettinger served as superintendent for six years (1918-1924). A teacher and principal for over a quarter-century before being elevated to a district superintendency, he worked for another decade in that position before joining fellow associate superintendents. Shortly after, at the age of fifty-six, the Board of Education chose him to succeed Maxwell--a hard act to follow. Interested in vocational training in elementary schools, Ettinger developed programs in the upper grades while consolidating and polishing initiatives that Maxwell had installed. He demonstrated interest in progressive practice, as had his predecessor, by personally approving the use of a public school by the PEA for a school-within-a-school progressive experiment under the direction of Elizabeth Irwin in 1922.

Much of Ettinger's attention, however, was directed toward securing sufficient funds to decrease class size and provide adequate housing for overcrowded, old, and outmoded schools. Intense and prolonged quarrels with the Board of Estimate over adequate resources for the schools and constant bickering with the Mayor over keeping top school posts free from partisan taint led to his contract not being renewed in 1924.[18]

Like Ettinger, William O'Shea's career began and ended in New York. Having taught for almost twenty years, he was named principal in 1906. Gradually, he moved through the necessary offices on the trek to the superintendency. At the age of sixty, he was selected from among the Associates on the Board of Superintendents to follow Ettinger. The initial five years of his tenure continued the pattern laid down by his predecessors: more buildings with larger capacities to house students; adequately trained teachers impartially selected; curriculum expanded and revised to cope with differences among children.

Using the vocabulary of voguish reformers, O'Shea produced annual reports of the school system's achievements that reflected exactly the institutionalization of changes made over a quarter-century earlier. "These schools," O'Shea wrote about elementary schools, "are the front line trenches in the battle for health, for social well-being, and for moral advancement."[19]

District superintendents were required to submit reports with a section labeled "Progressive Steps." Occasionally these reports would include references to classroom activities or projects, flexible schedules, and new curriculum materials. More often, though, "Progressive Steps" for the districts listed new testing procedures, how children were grouped, new services for children, and changes in rules.[20]

If Ettinger left his mark on the system by expanding vocational education, O'Shea left his imprint on courses of study and new programs stressing thrift, citizenship training and character development. He appeared less interested in importing classroom practices recommended by the Progressive Education Association into city classrooms although he would often borrow reformers' language for his reports. The stormy relationship between the public schools and PEA over Elizabeth Irwin's experimental school at P.S. 41, for example, produced a demand for a formal evaluation of the program. O'Shea's lack of support was evident. The evaluation committee, made up of school staff and PEA appointees recommended more formal and conventional instruction in basic skills. The PEA pulled out its financial support and eventually the experiment became a private school in Greenwich Village,"The Little Red School House."[21]

This departure of the only formal progressive experiment in the public schools occurred in the midst of the Depression, years which saw retrenchment measures rippling throughout the school system. Class size increased. Fewer teachers were allocated to schools. After school and summer programs were cut back. The last five years of O'Shea's tenure were marked by earnest efforts to preserve what had been done in earlier years. At the age of seventy, O'Shea retired. The Board of Education again turned to the cabinet of associate superintendents for O'Shea's successor.

Harold Campbell had graduated from the Maxwell Training School for teachers in 1902 and began a career as a teacher at both elementary and high schools, receiving his first appointment as high school principal in 1920. Four years later he was promoted to Associate Superintendent for High Schools and served in that position and Deputy Superintendent until the Board of Education again dipped into the pool of associate superintendents for their next school chief. After thirty-two years in the system, at the age of fifty, Campbell succeeded O'Shea in 1934 in the midst of the worst depression ever facing the city and nation.

Characterized as a "conservative educator" by both newspaper and professional journal, Campbell followed his predecessors' policies insofar as funds permitted in trying to reduce overcrowded schools, expand and increase services to children, and differentiate programs for handicapped and gifted students. The pattern laid out by Maxwell persisted. Except for one area. Campbell launched a "pedagogical revolution" that became a "key landmark in the triumph of progressivism," according to one historian.
In 1934, just a few months after becoming superintendent, he approved the largest experiment ever aimed at determining if progressive teaching practices could be installed in a major urban school system: the Activity Program.[22]

Besides the PEA's support, there was little public reaction to the

Superintendent's decision.Few citizens or school professionals knew Campbell personally or anything substantial about the decision he had made. After all, most New York City teachers seldom saw Campbell, O'Shea, Ettinger, or Maxwell other than in an occasional newspaper photo or a small, distant figure on a stage speaking to thousands of teachers. Few teachers could have recognized any of them had they visited their classrooms. What teachers did know of their superintendents' presence came indirectly from headquarter's decisions establishing working conditions within which they taught, e.g. class size, double-session schools, revised courses of study, personnel transfers, evaluation ratings--all of which influenced, to some degree, what happened in their classrooms.

Context for Classroom Teaching

Consider the classroom as a workplace. It should come as no surprise that the nineteenth century uniformity, so highly prized by the first generation of progressives, including Maxwell, became embedded in the design of classroom space. C.B.J. Snyder, architect for the New York City Board of Education between the 1890s and the 1920s, created the standardized classroom plan that was used throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Each classroom was built around the seats and desks of students and teacher: forty-eight permanent desks for grades 1-4; forty-five desks for grades 5-6; and 40 for grades 7-8.[23]

Rows of desks bolted to the floor facing the blackboard and teacher's desk made it easier for the teacher to scan the classroom for actual or potential disorder and have students work on tasks uniformly. The arrangement of space discouraged student movement, small group work or project activities--staple items on the progressives' agenda to modernize instruction. Reformers viewed movable furniture as a basic item, after light and heat, to activity-centered classrooms.

Few educators argued that it was impossible to implement progressive methods in rooms with rows of immovable desks, but such seating arrangements proved cumbersome, taxing the ingenuity of teachers in figuring out ways of outflanking this structural obstacle. The problem, of course, was money. Replacing stationary desks with movable ones was prohibitively costly.

The official position of the Board of Superintendents was stated in the New York Times in an article written by then Associate Superintendent Campbell in 1930 detailing all the progressive practices then current in the school system.

> As for the movable furniture idea and the substitution of comfortable chairs for the traditional rows of seats, we adopted it long ago in kindergarten and special classes. In most classes, however, particularly when there are thirty to forty pupils, the scheme is not practical. The moving of furniture is creative of noise and confusion. One teacher might want the chairs arranged one way, another teacher another way. Ease is not always productive of attention and concentration.

The clincher argument he cited was the danger of fire. A building in which students were obedient to order and marched in straight lines could be emptied in three minutes.

> Suppose the children were all reclining in easy chairs or wandering about a room filled with movable tables. Could it be done?

Campbell's answer: "Never."[24]

The cost of desk replacement was never mentioned publicly. In the midst of the depression, the capital investment in stationary desks for over 600 buildings was staggering. Yet the issue persisted because it was central to the reform of teaching practices. Compromises were struck. Beginning in 1935-1936, a year after Campbell moved into his new office, the Board of Education approved the Superintendent's recommendation that all new elementary school buildings will have 35 fixed seats in rows with additional movable tables and chairs and one or more workbenches to supplement the fixed desks. In 1942, the Board authorized more space in the standard classroom, movable furniture, equipment for library and science corners, and storage space for displays in new school buildings.

> The Board of Education has recognized that the standard classroom is no longer just a place to study and recite. It is now regarded as a workshop, a laboratory, a studio, and a place to practice gracious living.

Keep in mind that few buildings met the above standard in 1942. Teachers worked with children filling up row after row of desks in crowded rooms.[25]

While classes of fifty or more students were common around World War I, class size had been dropping since. In 1930, average class size in elementary schools hovered above 38 students. This figure, however, masked significant differences. For example, 17% of all elementary classes still had forty-five or more students. Within a school, the range varied dramatically. Special classes for "dull" students or handicapped ones were kept around twenty-five while other classes in the same building would be well over forty-five. To a teacher in the 1890s facing seventy-five students daily, the prospect of having only forty in a class would have been a delight. By the 1930s, however, there was a public commitment and philosophy that expected teachers to provide individual attention to each child.[26]

Given this tenet of progressive belief, how large a class was too large? Harold Campbell offered one answer in 1935. "It seems," he said, " almost inevitable that with more than 35 pupils of varying personality and capability a teacher can give but scant attention to the individual child." The ideal size for elementary classrooms of "normal children" where one teacher covers all subjects is, he wrote, about thirty children. When the Activity Program for elementary schools began (1934) average class size was 37.8 students. A large class at that time was defined as being over forty students; of all elementary classrooms forty-one percent were large by that standard. By 1942, the Activity Program had been declared a success and extended to all schools. Average class size was 34.4 children with 18% of all classes labeled large. In high schools, average class size was 35.4 although the range ran from 30.9 at Benjamin Franklin to 39.8 at Brooklyn Tech.[27]

Space and numbers of children defined critical dimensions of the teacher's daily world. So did the course of study. The Board of Education expected teachers and their supervisor, the principal to use in classrooms ten syllabi initially printed in the 1896 by-laws of the Board of Education, thereby explicitly telling teachers and principals how important particular content and its organization were. By 1924, there were twenty-six curricular bulletins and syllabi directing teachers' attention to what should be taught and why.[28]

A district-wide survey of school operations by a group of outside evaluators in 1924 included a report by Massachusetts Commissioner of Education Payson Smith on elementary school curriculum. Smith's report scored the curriculum for its inflexibility and lack of overall aims, its growth by "accretion," without concern for correlation of subjects. The curriculum was overcrowded, he wrote. Too much time was spent on "obsolete and often trifling material;" no guidelines for principals and teachers existed to determine how much content should be taught at each grade level.[29]

The formal responses by District Superintendents varied from passionate defenses of current courses of study to cautious agreement with Smith's conclusions. District Superintendent Taylor attacked Smith's assertions about the supposed inflexible course of study shrinking a classroom teacher's freedom.

> ...a school with fifty or a hundred teachers—many of them inexperienced—cannot afford to permit each teacher to interpret the course of study in a single school. The principal is there to organize, unify, and inspire the teachers in such a way as to realize the aims which she sets up for the school as a whole....

Yet District Superintendent Stephen Bayne who would become Associate Superintendent for elementary schools years later, agreed, albeit guardedly, with Smith's assessment that the curriculum omitted important objectives, grew haphazardly, lacked coherence, and needed periodic revision.[30]

Even though the 1924 survey results and rebuttals from school employees were not published until 1929, Smith's critique triggered O'Shea's appointment of a Committee on the Revision of Courses of Study and Methodology. Copying to some extent what Denver, Colorado had done earlier in the decade, the staff wrote over a five year period (1925-1930) nineteen new courses of study complete with the phrasing and vocabulary of progressive reformers on project methods, individual attention, and pursuing children's interests.[31]

Care, however, should be exercised in predicting classroom practice, as Bayne observed, "by the wording of a course of study," revised or not. Diversity in practice is assumed with almost 30,000 teachers. Once the the classroom door closed few principals and supervisors saw what happened or could determine how much teachers used syllabi they knew little about. Did these revised syllabi produce changes in classrooms? Clues to an answer appear in the tests students were given, the report cards they received, the rating sheets used to judge teachers, and the character of supervision that teachers received.

In 1925 for the first time O'Shea ordered the annual testing of elementary and junior high students in composition, arithmetic, spelling, silent reading, and vocabulary. These achievement tests included a great deal of factual knowledge and were linked closely to the revised courses of study. In high schools the state Regents' academic examinations had been given since 1878. By the 1930s city educators' views conflicted over classroom impact of these annual exams. At least half of the high school teachers and department chairmen saw these annual exams as hardening certain topics in courses of study, reinforcing drill, memorization and cramming, and having a generally negative impact on what teachers did in their classrooms.[32]

While complaining that in his visits to classrooms he "hears entirely too frequent reference to these examinations," Associate Superintendent of High School, John Tildsley in 1925 stated bluntly that these tests "seem to be necessary as a means of checking upon the work of the schools...." These exams took the place of school inspection since with "the force at the disposal of this Division, it is impossible to give."[33]

Items on report cards also produce clues of instructional practice. Percentage grades and letters were given to students in subjects. Citizenship marks were also given. The junior high report cards in the 1920s, for example, listed the required subjects of reading, grammar, spelling, composition, arithmetic, history and civics, geography with spaces set aside for the final grade, mid-term and final exam marks. Space was provided for grades on effort, conduct, and personal habits. On the high school report card, letter marks were given up to six times a year, three a semester. One high school handbook for students prescribed fifth and tenth week marks; at the end of the fourteenth week exams were given and a week later the final mark was to be entered.[34]

A similar system of letter grades in subjects based upon teacher's judgment of a student's proficiency prevailed in elementary schools until 1935 when the report card was revised to include a number of student behaviors and attitudes (e.g. whether the child works well with others, obeys courteously, is reliable, plays well with others,etc.).This was consistent with revisions then underway in the elementary school program.

In addition to tests and report cards signaling that content, achievement, and fidelity to teacher directions registered strongly, explicit and formal rules also hinted at classroom behavior. During the interwar period principals and supervisors circulated to teachers rules for managing classes and executing lessons. These rules did not describe what occured in classrooms but they surely defined what supervisors believed "good" teaching practices were.

For elementary and secondary school teachers in diverse subjects, regulations had a similar ring. A sampling:

.1921-Evander Childs High School: "For oral work insist on clear speaking. The student should stand erect, with head up, and speak with sufficient clearness to be heard in all parts of of the room."

.1924-Julia Richman High School: "Organize classes according to regulations....
Do not allow any interruptions of a recitation."

.1926-for all elementary and secondary teachers in the Bronx:
"size the children and assign seats....
make a seating plan of the class. It helps discipline....
drill on standing and sitting; on putting the benches and desks up and down noiselessly....
place your daily plan, your time schedule on the desk where you can refer to them frequently....
keep a strict account of tests, oral work, and other data that will aid in giving the child a just mark on the report card. "

.1930-Bushwick High School, Math Department:
"Plan for Geometry Period
1. Assignment of new homework
2. Presentation, development, and application of the new lesson
3. Blackboard recitations on review of theorems...."

.1932-John Adams High School, Latin Department:
"Recitation by pupils should be clear and easily heard in all parts of the room. Remember the placard posted in all rooms, 'Stand Straight! Face the Class! Speak Up!' Don't let pupils talk directly to you; get the audience situation."

.1939-all foreign language teachers:
"Economy in routine demands uniformity. This is particularly true of rising when reciting, going to the front of the room to give an oral report,etc. Pupils should know what is expected of them....
Other activities should be carried on by pupils at their seats while board work is being done....
A few minutes of testing, either oral or written, should reveal whether the aims of the lesson have been achieved...." 35

One of the strongest signals to teachers on what they were to do in class is the evaluation rating and the manner that supervision was implemented by principals, first assistants, district superintendents and department chairmen. A new rating form was introduced in 1921 to eliminate the many complaints raised by both teachers and principals over the lack of uniformity in ratings and the abuses stemming from "secret reports" on teachers from principals that were used by the Board of Examiners in determining promotions.[36]

William O'Shea, then Associate Superintendent, chaired the task force that drafted the revised form. Eliminated were the letters A,B,C,D to label performance and in its place a two-point scale of Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory was introduced. Space was provided for the supervisor to describe instances of exceptional service and weaknesses. Five teaching areas were identified.

O'Shea wrote the explanation in the handbook for each of the five areas to be rated; teachers received copies of the handbook explaining how evaluation would occur. O'Shea's language resonated with the "New Education." Project methods and pupil activity ran as themes throughout his discourse on appropriate instruction. "We learn to do by doing," O'Shea wrote. "The greatest possible participation of all the children is the real measure of success, and such success," he said" cannot be attained where the old type of individual question and answer recitation is used too largely."[37]

Among educators, supervision meant more than filling out a form.The essence of supervision, according to New York City officials, was to improve instruction. But supervisors were also required to judge a teacher's performance. The two expectations,then as now, clashed, creating a dilemma each time a supervisor entered a classroom.Dr. Alfred Hartwell, Buffalo superintendent and one of the investigators hired to survey the schools in 1924, saw the dilemma clearly on his visits with principals and district superintendents as they supervised and rated teachers in sixteen schools and fifty classrooms.[38]

Hartwell saw that too often supervision and inspection became indistinguishable. He described one visit to a classroom where the district superintendent questioned the teacher in front of the class on her pupils' attendance and what professional courses she had taken. He asked her for the lesson plan book which he examined and found in good order. She was then told to conduct the lesson for the visitors. The superintendent took notes and promised the teacher to discuss them with her the next time he visited. Teachers observed by Hartwell and supervisors were rated on "personality, control of class, self-control, discipline, and scholarship." While he found uniformity in the "recording of ratings" he saw much variation in styles and quantity of supervision. Too many principals and district superintendents practiced supervision, he believed, in a manner that created fear among teachers at the very rumor of a supervisor coming to their rooms. Moreover, too little time was available. District superintendents supervised about 1000 teachers in twenty to forty schools, depending upon the district. Two officials that he cited spent twenty minutes to a half hour in each class; they made 400 to 600 visits the previous school year. Principals told him they spent between twenty to twenty-five percent of their time in classrooms.[39]

Over ten years later a Brooklyn high school teacher wrote that his colleagues often feared a principal or supervisor, as "someone to whom to cater so as to avoid his enmity." He scored principals for failing to reach the ideal: "the supervisor is superior,a sort of expert in the educational process and therefore can help teachers in the dilemnas that confront them." Citing instances of principals with particular instructional passions, e.g.

good penmanship, following the time schedule to the minute, poetry and spelling, using flashcards, he describes how these peculiar notions about teaching infect supervision and make teachers, the writer declared, "timid, easily frightened, scared to have an opinion of their own." The accuracy of the cases the teacher describes is less important than his rendering of the beliefs that teachers held about supervisors.[40]

By describing classrooms, syllabi, class size, report cards, written rules, teacher ratings, and supervisory practices in the interwar years I assume that working conditions, the tools available to teachers, and the explicit expectations of their supervisors describe a context that is related to what teachers do daily. Surely something can be learned about how people drive if we have some knowledge of traffic signals, driving conditions, and what good drivers are expected to do on the road because a linkage exists between how people drive, traffic rules and road conditions. Certain contextual conditions, I believe, helped shape the patterns of instruction, perhaps even reinforcing certain ones, that prevailed in classrooms across the city since the turn of the century. By the early 1930s, what had occurred in New York were changes in syllabi that incorporated progressives' vocabulary and suggested activities for teachers. But the connective tissue of instruction—classroom architecture, class size, report cards, rules, evaluation process, and supervision--hewed closely to prevailing teacher-centered practices.[41]

The Activity Program

Return now to 1934 when newly-appointed Superintendent Harold Campbell approved the largest effort to try out progressive practices in the nation. In describing this six year experiment a direct examination of teaching across the city will unfold.

Called the Activity Program, the experiment was initially proposed by the Principal's Association to Stephen Bayne, who had just been appointed to head the Division of Elementary Schools. Going up the hierarchy, the experiment was approved at every step. Assistant Superintendent John Loftus, a former elementary principal with a city-wide reputation for installing innovative programs, was tapped to direct the program. Ten percent of all elementary schools (69)were chosen on the basis of being typical for their district and for having positive attitudes toward progressive practices. Over 75,000 students and 2200 teachers in the 69 schools participated in the Activity Program for almost six years. Note, however, that not all classes in a school designated as experimental were involved; the total number of students and teachers in these 69 schools were 90,000 and 2700, respectively.[42]

What was the Activity Program? While the definition shifted over the course of the experiment, the essence of the massive effort was distilled in a 1940 memo from Loftus and J. Wayne Wrightstone to J. Cayce Morrison, New York State Assistant Commissioner of Education and head of the team that the Board of Education hired to evaluate the experiment. According to the memo, major concepts in the Activity Program were:

- "Children and teachers participate in selecting subject matter and in planning activities.
- The program centers on the needs and interests of individuals and groups.
- Time schedules are flexible, except for certain activities ... which may have fixed periods.
- Learning is largely experimental.
- The formal recitation is modified by conferences, excursions, research, dramatization, construction and sharing, interpreting and evaluating activities.
- Discipline is self-control rather than imposed control....
- The teacher is encouraged to exercise initiative and to assume re-

sponsibility; she enjoys considerable freedom in connection with the course of study, time schedules, and procedure.

.Emphasis is placed on instruction and creative expression in the arts and crafts." 43

In a less sedate description, Loftus, speaking to teachers, said the Activity Program was a "revolt against verbalism, so-called 'textbook mastery' and literal 'recitation.'" Teaching was tailored to each child. The "congenial group" or committee was typical of activity methods as was the "integrated curriculum" (correlated or unified curriculum to an earlier generation of reformers).[44]

The six year experiment stimulated staff development for teachers. In both regular and activity schools, teachers took courses offered by local universities, the Board of Education, and the Principals' Association. Elaborate directions, syllabi, classroom suggestions, and community resources were compiled, published, and distributed to teachers who expressed interest in the Activity Program.

During the life of the experiment students in matched pairs of activity and regular elementary schools took batteries of test. Children, teachers, and administrators answered questionnaires about various aspects of the program. Teams of trained observers using specially designed instruments visited regular and Activity Program classrooms to record student and teacher behaviors.

When the experiment was over in 1941, Loftus's office was inundated with final reports from Activity Schools. Scrapbooks, reports, photos spilled over tables and chairs, nearly filling his office. One school sent forty-six illustrated reports of projects, each weighing about ten pounds. Poetry, art, songs, weavings, vases, and hundreds of other examples of student work accompanied the reports.[45]

Before turning to classroom practice, keep in mind that the teachers most committed to the informal curriculum (another phrase for Activity Program) did not follow an activity schedule the entire day. Teachers set aside, at most, three hours daily. Another compromise struck early in the experiment was spending one hour daily for "drills and skills" because of the high mobility of students between schools.[46]

Beginning in the first year of the Activity Program observers went to classrooms and described what they saw both in the experimental and regular classrooms. In a 1941 study of twenty-four classes in both types of schools, the investigators found that pupils in activity classrooms "spend somewhat less time on the conventional academic subjects and devote more time to arts, crafts, and certain other enterprise,. (show-and-tell , discussion, student dramatics,etc.)." Yet the researchers also noted that the amount of time spent on formal subjects such as arithmetic, reading, spelling, and what today would be called social studies "is nearly the same in activity and control classes."[47]

The observers recorded whether students worked on tasks in small groups or together as an entire class. They found that the regular classes spent 93% of their time in the whole group working on tasks while the activity classes spent 84% in the same manner. A paragraph follows these figures trying to explain why the difference "is not as large as one might expect in view of the fact that the programs presumably are quite different."[48]

A related study funded by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) through Teachers College researched, among other things, what happened in classrooms by observing almost fifty classes and over 2000 children in sixteen schools (eight activity and eight regular) between 1937-1939. While expressing some dismay over how their instruments failed to capture fully the sharp distinctions between classrooms that they saw, they did find that the "average" activity class was different from the "average" control one by:

."more outward appearance of pupil self-direction,

.more diversity and a larger range of (tasks), especially during certain periods of the day,

.more projects of the sort that correlate various enterprises and skills as distinguished from the study of isolated subject matter,

.a considerably larger display of the pupil's handiwork."[49]

The major evaluation of the entire six years occurred in 1940. Commissioned by the New York City Board of Education, national experts in testing, evaluation, and curriculum spent a year interviewing teachers, principals, and headquarter staff. They also tested children. The conclusions of the study were based upon an intensive investigation of 194 classrooms in twenty-eight schools (fourteen activity; fourteen regular) of which ten pairs had not been part of any previous evaluations.

Using an Activity Scale that the survey team had constructed from program descriptions that the school staff had given them,and from a review of the entire literature on project methods and progressive practices, investigators rated classrooms they observed for each one of fifty-six items on the scale covering the primary elements of the activity movement. On this five-point scale a score of less than 1.5 meant that the classroom had little or no activity program. A score of 4.5 or above registered a classroom with an activity program in place and operating effectively, according to the raters.

The team found that 100 activity classrooms rated a mean score of 3.2 which fell into the following category:

> Between 2.5-3.4 means that most of the elements of the activity program are observable and that the total pattern of the activity program is beginning to take shape, but that many elements of the regular program, inconsistent with activity concepts, are still practiced, and that much help is needed in improving the activity procedure. 50

In analyzing the degree of implementation in 100 activity classrooms, the staff found:

> .20% of classrooms where activity procedure was confused and ineffective (below 2.5 on Activity Scale).
>
> .38% of classrooms made substantial progress in developing an activity program but still required assistance.
>
> .42% of classrooms had a well-developed activity program between 3.5 and 4.8 on Activity Scale.[51]

In 94 classrooms in regular schools, the mean score registered 1.6.

> Between 1.5-2.4 means that many elements of the activity procedure are observable but poorly practiced due to lack of understanding of objectives or uncertainty as to means. Occasionally, some elements of the activity procedure may well be developed but be so intermingled with the regular procedure as to be disturbing or ineffective.[52]

For regular classrooms, no item on the Activity Scale reached 3.0.

The study confirmed top administrators' beliefs that New York teachers could implement the best of progressive practices, as defined by these evaluators, since 23% of the teachers had classrooms rated at 4.0 or above (included in the 42% mentioned above).

Finally, the survey staff concluded that activity schools had been most successful in getting students to participate and cooperate in groups, encouraging student movement in classrooms, developing positive student attitudes toward school, teachers, and peer as well as "purposeful, orderly, courteous behavior." Teachers were less successful in developing flexible use of classroom furniture, use of work benches and tools,and reporting to parents.[53]

What also materialized from the study was the realization that the Activity Program penetrated regular schools unintentionally. "One regular school," the final report observed, "had nearly as much of the activity program as two of the activity schools selected for intensive study. The evaluators found 10% of regular classrooms rated 2.5 or above on the Activity Scale, meaning that they had made "appreciable progress in translating the activity concepts into practice."[54]

The state team concluded that in teaching knowledge and skills, creative work, attitudes, and behavior the Activity Program proved to be as effective as the use of conventional methods of teaching and superior in "educating children to think, improving pupils' attitudes and social behavior." Pronouncing the experiment a success, Morrison recommended that the Activity Program be extended throughout the school system gradually and on a voluntary basis.[55]

An experiment involving over 70,000 students from diverse settings was launched in the midst of the worst economic depression to hit the nation. It received no additional funds for equipment, furniture, or instructional materials and experienced cutbacks in special teachers, while class size increased. A high annual turnover of students, teachers, and supervisors occurred—principals changed in forty-five of the sixty-nine schools. If school officials felt some justifiable pride in carrying out the effort, of making chicken salad out of chicken feathers, it seems, in retrospect, a sensible feeling given all the difficulties facing them.

On January 20, 1942, six weeks after the U.S. entered World War II, Harold Campbell approved the gradual extension of the Activity Program to all elementary schools.

Determining the extent that progressive practices, including the Activity Program, were implemented in over 35,000 classrooms by 1940 is difficult. A few years earlier, then Associate Superintendent Campbell, asked the question:"To what extent has the New York City school system made use of the so-called 'new' educational techniques and ideas of the progressive educationists as exemplified by the child-centered school?"

His answer: A great deal.

His evidence:

- .pupils managed clubs in high schools,
- .students revised civics textbooks in eighteen schools,
- .some elementary schools had miniature municipal governments and officials,
- .the socialized recitation was practically universal; pupils take charge of the class and conduct recitations,
- .more and more project work was being done every year,
- .500 schools had savings banks,
- .100,000 children enrolled in homemaking, cooking meals and acquiring housekeeping skills. 56

Except for two items that dealt with instruction in the classroom, the other items were organizational and curricular changes engineered by central administration and implemented by principals, all of which were easily monitored since they were observable. Not so for socialized recitation and projects.

A decade later, Joseph Loftus estimated that activity methods were used in 25% of all city elementary schools "in some degree," he said. The estimate was no more than an informed guess since no one had visited all teachers to ascertain whether such methods were, indeed, practiced and to what extent. Furthermore, many concepts about child-centered classrooms, project methods, and just the word "progressive" were interpreted differently by both professionals and laymen.

Left to the teacher was a great deal of discretion for selective implementation, e.g. one teacher lets a class elect officers without changing any portion of her instructional repertoire; another teacher sets aside 2:30-3:00 each day for students to work on anything they please and calls that an activity program, etc. 57

Given these obstacles, one can only pursue hints or occasional indicators of larger impact over a two decade period.

Some schools, like islands in the midst of an enormous lake, remained untouched by the ideology of the progressive movement and the Activity Program. In 1942, for example, three Harlem schools with 6000 pupils became the site for a project to improve both instruction and curriculum in the first grade. When the support team from central headquarters arrived, they found classrooms, curriculum, and time schedules for each subject. Teaching practices were unmarked by any of the ferment occurring elsewhere in the city. First grade teachers were familiar with progressive language but demonstrated no evidence of modified classroom practice. Over a two year period, the Research Bureau's attention, modest resources, and staff development altered the traditional classroom, curriculum, use of time, and instructional practice sufficiently to make the target primary classrooms activity-oriented. How many of the other 700 elementary schools in the city were like these three in 1942, I cannot say. But exist, they did.[58]

Consider also the sizable number of teachers who were opposed for either philosophical or other reasons (a common argument given by many teachers was the great amount of extra work it took) to the activity program. The Morrison evaluation of activity and regular schools sampled teacher opinion after six years of the experiment. They found that 36% of teachers in the activity schools preferred the regular program; in regular schools 93%, unsurprisingly, favored the conventional program. A considerable number of teachers, then, found the experiment lacking because they believed that classroom activities concentrating on whole group instruction, little student movement, and question-answer format were better for them and their children. In comparing the supposed benefits of the Activity Program, these teachers remained convinced of the rationality, if not effectiveness, of conventional instruction.[59]

High Schools

Turning to the high school, there is evidence that some schools initiated contract teaching (the Dalton Plan). As early as 1924, eleven high schools reported that some teachers in each school were using individual contracts with students as a way of diversifying the course of study. Teachers submitted articles to High Points, the journal written by and for high school teachers in the system, on how they modified the Dalton Plan for their classrooms. But these references number less than a handful.[60]

In 1935, Teachers College professor Thomas Briggs sent a graduate student into twenty-one New York City and suburban high schools to "observe the work of the best teachers of any subject." Principals selected the 104 teachers the observer visited. I report the results because Briggs found no difference between city and suburban teaching practice.[61]

Based upon these narrative descriptions, Briggs found 80% of the teachers "teaching from the textbook." The remainder had classrooms where pupil participation in discussions and panels occurred and substantial linkage between current events and subject matter were made. About 65% of the classes used "conventional procedure of questions by the teacher on an assignment with answers by the pupils or of specific directions followed by board or seat work." In the use of traditional recitation, 80% of the teachers were observed practicing it.[62]

Another example of high school instruction is an actual transcript of a demonstration lesson in an American History class at Washington Irving High School in 1940, witnessed by a teacher, principal, and department chairman from three other high schools. The subject of the forty minute lesson was the railways of the nation. The thirty-five students had been assigned two pages in the text and excerpts from the American Observer, a newspaper published for high school students.[63]

The transcript carries 96 entries, 31 for the teacher and 65 for students. Of the 31 teacher entries, 26 were questions, many married to long explanations. The 65 student responses were paragraph length in the transcript indicating that ample time for expression was permitted. The lesson included a discussion of a graph on railroad statistics, one student who copied the class's responses to a question on the chalkboard, and the teacher writing other points on the board.[64]

The three observers agreed that it was an excellent lesson and that the teaching was first rate. They viewed it as an exceptional instance of a socialized recitation, with student participation dominating discourse. The teacher channeled content into leading questions and periodic summaries,revealing the deft touch of a solid professional,according to the observers. They were impressed with the way students rose from their seats to answer questions, the extent of student talk, the teacher calling on each student by "Miss" rather than the first name, and the comfort students and teacher felt with one another.[65]

Such individual cases help. Yet more descriptions of what teachers did would add much to what is currently available. In a small effort to increase data on teacher practice, I located 152 descriptions and photos of classrooms during the interwar period. The Appendix contains my rationale for looking at classrooms the way I do and the methods I used to categorize data. Included there are also some cautions on using this data. Table 1 describes the specific categories that were included for each teaching pattern. Two graphs consolidate the data for patterns of instructional practice in New York City.

The data I collected from 152 classrooms support the survey results, evidence drawn from contextual conditions, and evaluations of the Activity Program. A substantial minority, no more than an estimated one of

Table 1. PATTERNS OF TEACHING: DIMENSIONS

Classroom instruction was divided into five categories: classroom arrangements, group instruction, classroom talk, classroom activities, and student movement. For each category, there were specific behaviors that could be located in descriptions and photographs. If found, they were coded and counted. The patterns, categories, and specific behaviors follow:

	Teacher-Centered	Mixed Pattern	Student-Centered
CLASS ARRANGEMENT	.movable desks and chairs in rows facing teacher's desk and/or blackboard	.movable desks and chairs in hollow-square, horseshoe,etc. .up to half the class arranged at desks and chairs facing one another.	.students sit at tables or clusters of desks facing one another. .no rows
GROUP INSTRUCTION	.whole class .teacher works with individual students while rest of class works at desks.	.teacher works with small groups. .teacher varies grouping: whole, small, and individual.	.class divided into groups. .students engaged in individual and small group activities.
CLASSROOM TALK	.no one in class talking. .teacher talking .teacher-led recitation or discussion.	.student reports, debates, panels, etc. .high frequency of both teacher and student instructional talk.	.student-led discussion or recitation. .students talking in groups
CLASS ACTIVITIES	.students working at desks. .teacher talking (lecture, explaining, giving directions, reading to class, etc.) .teacher checking work .students taking test, watching film, listening to radio,etc. .teacher-led recitation or discussion.	.high frequency of activities that indicate both teacher- and student-centered behaviors.	.class in small groups .students work individually and in small groups. .students lead discussion or recitation. .students working on projects or at centers.
STUDENT MOVEMENT	.no movement at all. .student needs permission to leave seat.	.less than five students away from desk	.six or more students away from seats at one time. .students move freely without teacher's permission.

Figure 1. PATTERNS OF INSTRUCTION IN NEW YORK CITY ELEMENTARY CLASSROOMS, 1920-1940

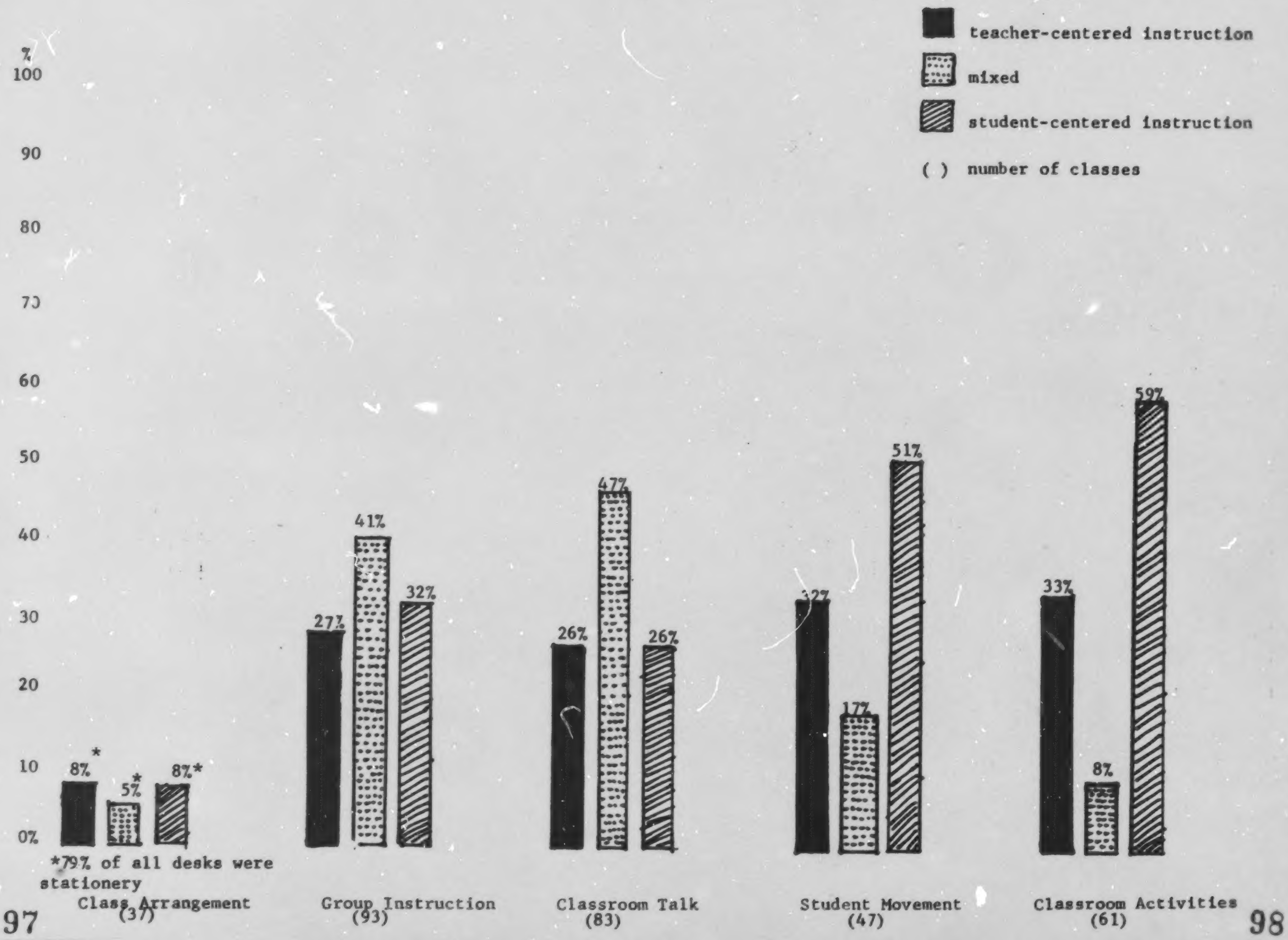
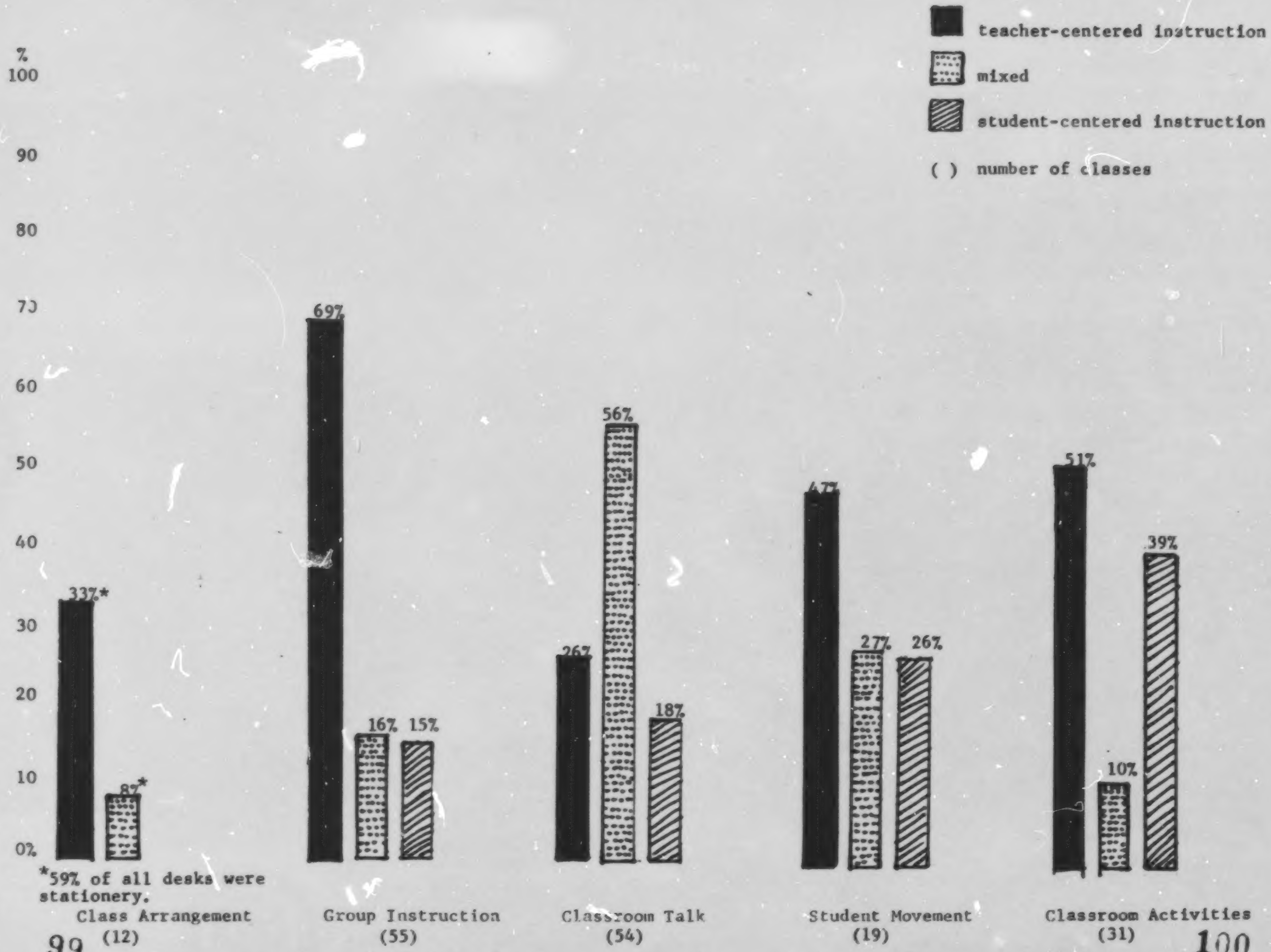
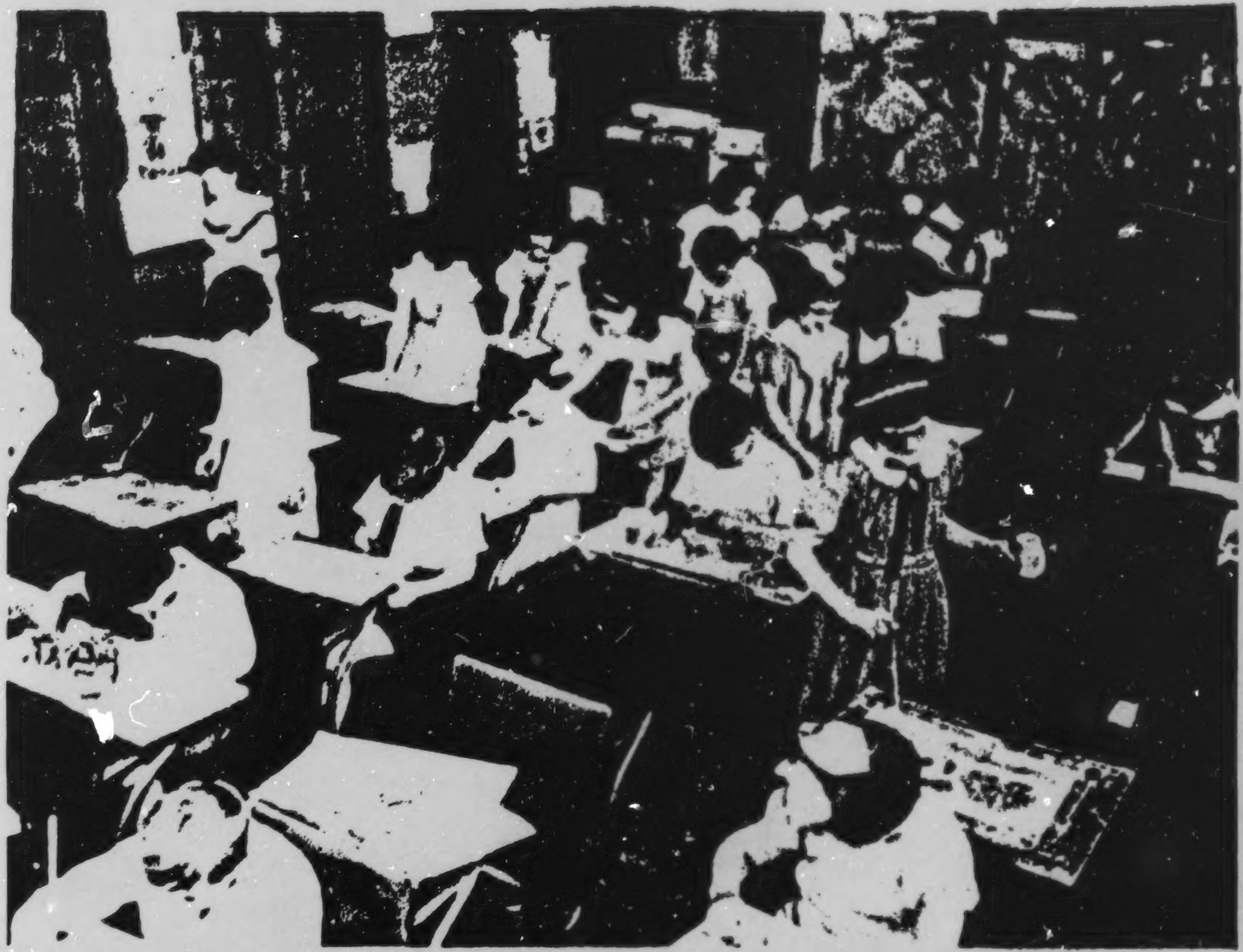


Figure 2. PATTERNS OF INSTRUCTION IN NEW YORK CITY HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOMS, 1920-1940



*59% of all desks were stationery.



New York City Elementary Classroom, An Activity Program, 1934-1935 (All The Children)

New York City Elementary Classroom, Fourth Grade, 1943 (Library of Congress) four elementary and, even a lesser fraction of, high school teachers adopted progressive teaching practices, defined broadly, used them in varying degrees in their classrooms. The dominant mode of instruction remained a combination of teacher-centered and mixed patterns. Nonetheless, there is considerable evidence that teachers incorporated student-centered practices into their repertoires, particularly in elementary classrooms.

From the largest public school system in the world, I turn now to Denver, a school district two thousand miles away with less than two percent as many students as New York's.

DENVER

When Mira Scott Frank's children went to school and moved through the grades, she baked cookies, wrote letters, met with teachers and principals, chaired parent meetings, and worked at a score of tasks that active PTA mothers do as they serve in local and district leadership posts. In 1939 Frank was elected to the Board of Education and served twelve years. Since the 1920s, she had worked with parents and school professionals. At the Valverde School dedication in the Spring of 1951 she spoke passionately about a school system that had come under attack from groups outside Denver for its progressive practices.

> Over the years, because Denver's system had been recognized as an outstanding one, it has been chosen as one of the few cities to participate in national studies for the improvement of education. There has been much criticism of late leveled at so-called 'progressive education.' This has been a form of propaganda. Denver's educational system is its own. It has never been an importation from outside. True, in 1934, we participated in the Eight Year Study, sponsored by the Progressive Education Association.... But everything done in that study was originated in Denver. What was good we retained; what was unsatisfactory was discarded some years ago. 66

Board member Frank's defense of Denver's progressive practices was accurate: no school programs and directions were forcibly or even subtly grafted onto an unwilling or unaware school district. Even before Frank's tenure on the Board. Denver welcomed with gusto progressive practices brought by former high school principal Jesse Newlon and the young men he hired after he became Denver's superintendent in 1920.

In the years after Newlon moved into his offices at Fourteenth and Tremont, Denver newspapers, businessmen, and city officials boosted the school system's growing national reputation. A headline from a local newspaper, "Denver Leads Way in Progressive Education," would cause no historian to blink twice since such articles were common in the Rocky

Mountain News and the Denver Post. But to see such an article in the Taxpayers' Review complete with three photographs, was a surprise. Its appearance suggests that the ideas of Jesse Newlon and his successors found an enthusiastic response even among citizens normally vigilant about anything that might increase school expenditures. Progressive ideas introduced by Newlon were adopted quickly as a local product.[67]

Frank's memory of the Eight-Year Study was also accurate in linking the experiment in five Denver high schools to the cycle of curriculum revision that, again, Newlon had introduced in his first term as school chief. What Frank neglected to mention, and there was no reason for her to do so, was how fortunate Denver was in its continuity in top leadership. Between 1920-1940, four superintendents served the Denver schools: Jesse Newlon, A.L. Threlkeld, Alexander Stoddard, and Charles Greene. Except for Stoddard who served less than two years, Newlon's influence extended over the entire period since he hired Threlkeld as assistant superintendent in 1921 and Greene as the first Director of Research in 1923. Threlkeld succeeded Newlon and served a decade; after Stoddard's brief term, Greene who had been Threlkeld's assistant superintendent since 1933 and who had headed up the Eight-Year Study in the Denver schools, assumed the superintendency in 1939, holding the post until 1947. The chronology is useful in underscoring a continuity in leadership that the city schools enjoyed as it moved through two decades of boom, depression, and a second world war.

Superintendent Jesse Newlon was an outsider. Born, reared, and educated in Indiana, Newlon taught high school and began his career as an administrator in 1905 when he became principal of the Charlestown, Indiana high school. Moving through principalships in Illinois and Nebraska with time out to earn a masters' degree (1914) from Teachers College he became superintendent of the Lincoln,Nebraska schools in 1917. After three years there he was appointed to Denver's top post.

Threlkeld, who served as Newlon's assistant and deputy worked as superintendent in three small Missouri towns for a decade before Newlon asked him to come to Denver. While assistant superintendent, Threlkeld also earned a masters degree at Teachers College in 1923 . After Newlon's departure to head Teachers College's Lincoln School, Threlkeld maintained the directions laid down by his colleague, elaborating and amplifying certain elements as the Depression buffeted the Denver schools. His ten year superintendency was the longest since Aaron Gove's thirty year stint that spanned the turn of the century.

Both Newlon and Threlkeld believed in the progressive doctrine of social efficiency and scientific management. They blended administrative progressivism with clear pedagogical views on the pivotal role of the teacher in instructional and curricular decisionmaking and the importance of having flexible, activity-centered schools that linked daily life to what students learned. For two decades these two men built both physically and organizationally a school system that grew from almost 33,000 students in 1920 to over 45,000 in 1937 but of more importance they helped make Denver a national pacesetter for city school systems in curriculum revision and teacher participation in making instructional decisions.

Their stature as school leaders who not only used the buzz words of the day but also implemented efficient school management, continuous revision of the curriculum,and progressive school practices was noted by their peers when Newlon was elected National Education Association President in 1925 and when Threlkeld became President of the Department of Superintendence in 1936.[68]

Continuity in top leadership is one thing; what happened in classrooms as a result of decisions aimed at improving instruction and curriculum is another. The usual help that historians get from previous studies of a school system is limited in Denver. If New York City schools intimidate researchers with its size and complexity, at least it was surveyed and evaluated repeatedly. But not Denver where the scale, a city of 250,000, is well within the grasp of most historians. In 1916 Franklin Bobbitt, Charles Judd, Elwood Cubberley, and a flock of professors, graduate students and practitioners studied the schools. A quarter-century later when the Eight Year Study's results were released, all Denver secondary schools were included because they had joined the experiment as a group. Nothing else. This restricts the evidence that can be gained from external sources on teacher practice.

In order to determine what occurred in classrooms, I will review the contextual conditions within which teachers worked, describe two major interlocking experiments that stretched over the entire interwar period, and analyze the data I collected from 133 Denver classrooms.

The Setting

Newlon came to Denver less than two years after the Armistice and four years after the 1916 survey. That survey revealed old, overcrowded schools with cramped, dimly lit classrooms. Because of the war, few expenditures for new buildings or renovations were authorized. By 1922 a concerted campaign to pass a major bond referendum succeeded. With these funds and judicious use of money in the annual operating budget, seventeen elementary, five junior high and three senior high schools had been built by the time Newlon left for New York City. Before the full force of the Depression hit, Threlkeld saw twelve more elementary and two junior high buildings go up. So between 1920-1931 over half of the elementary, seven of eight junior high schools and three of five senior highs were constructed. This massive construction of new buildings and expansion of the junior high program over a decade also brought movable furniture, lunchrooms, libraries, gymnasiums, and ample outdoor recreation space for both elementary and secondary schools.[69]

New classrooms were built to hold thirty-eight students although by 1923 a definition of classes that were small(below thirty), medium(thirty to forty), and large (over forty) had emerged. By that year, 60% of all elementary classes were between thirty and forty students; 13% had over forty and,surprisingly,27% of all elementary classes had less than thirty students. But by 1934, large classes had jumped from 13% to 33% and elementary classes below thirty students had shrunk from 27% to 3%. Thus 64% of all classes were between thirty and forty students. At the junior and senior high school, headquarter administrators tried to keep class size in the middle range. They succeeded and even saw one of every three high school classes with less than thirty students; 20% of the classes mostly in non-academic areas (e.g. music, art, physical education) had more than forty students.[70]

That few administrators and teachers complained publicly about class size may be due to Denver's position in having smaller classes at all levels than comparably-sized systems elsewhere. Class size which was a perennial issue in New York City, failed to surface in Denver as an abrasive item between school officials, parents, and teachers.[71]

Nor were courses of study a target for discontent. The ideas Jesse Newlon brought to Denver and translated into an on-going program were simple, clear, and potentially effective in altering teacher behavior. In a 1916 paper he wrote when he was serving as a principal, he laid out concepts he executed five years later in Denver.

> When a group of teachers has worked upon this problem (making curriculum) during a period of two or three years, has carried on a series of investigations, has debated the issues pro and con in departmental meetings, in committee, and in faculty meetings, and has finally evolved and adopted a set of curriculums, and has determined upon the character of courses to be offered, that group of teachers will teach better and with more understanding and sympathy than they could ever otherwise teach. 72

Teacher participation in curriculum revision was uncommon. The practice in New York City and elsewhere was to state goals, include guidelines for content selection or actual subject matter designed by central office administrators with some help from a few carefully chosen teachers. After the course of study was completed, perhaps even reviewed by a handful of carefully chosen teachers, the document was revised, printed, and delivered to each principal for use in the school. Supervisors might meet with principals to explain the new arithmetic or geography course; thereafter the principal was expected to see that teachers used the new documents. Sometimes, after a number of years, the syllabus would be reviewed and updated. Sometimes not.

Newlon proceeded differently. He wanted widespread, active teacher involvement in determining what should be taught because he believed that such participation produced better trained teachers far more able and enthusiastic to conduct a classroom that is "more natural, more vital, and more meaningful to the students than it has ever been." Also, he might have added: more progressive.[73]

The process that teachers went through, he believed, was just as, if not more, important as the course of study in its final version. Anyway, Denver administrators reasoned, if teachers and the specialists they hired designed an inadequate syllabus it would be quickly identified as such and within a short time revised again, since both Newlon and Threlkeld directed that curriculum revision be a continuous, not a one-time, process. That the process had a fair chance of succeeding, apart from the novelty of letting teachers participate in developing ideas they were expected to teach,was due to a factor that neither top executive mentioned in their effort to upgrade teacher performance through curriculum revision: the high level of education among Denver teachers. By 1931,54% of Denver elementary staffs had four or more years of college education; in comparable size cities elsewhere only 22% had a similar level of schooling. For senior high school teachers 95% were college graduates; in New York City, only 69% had earned their bachelor's degree.[74]

Between 1920 and 1930, Newlon and Threlkeld supervised the work of over 700 teachers and principals organized into thirty-seven committees led by teachers. These committees revised thirty-five courses of study at all school levels. In Newlon's words, curriculum and instruction "must grow from the inside out." By 1927, a novel, widescale involvement of teachers making curriculum kept the promise Newlon made.[75]

For those teachers who revised courses of study in the large, airy rooms set aside for them in the new downtown administration building, more than miles still separated what they produced from the classrooms of their fellow teachers.Unlike their colleagues in other districts,however, top Denver officials gave an unusual amount of thought to implementation of teacher-designed syllabi.They were especially keen on developing organizational mechanisms that would turn curriculum revision into a tool for changing teacher practices. Newlon and Threlkeld felt that the planning of syllabi by teachers was an effective, inexpensive way of increasing their knowledge and bringing them in touch with the current thinking of the profession,i.e. progressive practice. Looking back over a half-century,a present-day superintendent would applaud the Denver school chiefs for initiating shrewd implementation procedures to spread new ideas throughout a school system.

The applause would be due for two reasons. Some superintendents seek both broad and intense teacher involvement,as Denver's school chiefs did, but seldom can mobilize the resources to transform the intention into a carefully designed framework that gives teachers time, aid, and independence. Second, Denver's leadership avoided symbolic or token participation. Take teacher involvement.

In 1927-1928 there were 1400 Denver teachers, of whom 27% (376 teachers) served on curriculum committees. They were distributed as follows:

--10% of all elementary teachers

--42% of junior high school teachers

--48% of senior high school teachers [76]

Consider the process. Each school had at least one teacher on a committee. All secondary principals and one-third of elementary principals were in these groups. Also, by 1927, five years after the entire effort had begun, 626 teachers had served on committees. Assuming that a number of teachers had retired, died, or left the system, a rough estimate of between thirty to forty percent of the entire instructional staff had participated in curriculum revision.

And that process included the following:

—teachers chaired subject-matter committees on which principals and central office administrators served.

—teachers worked during the day; substitutes were hired to replace them on the days they were at the administration building.

--university curriculum specialists worked with teachers; over 30 scholars and practitioners, at the center of a national network of progressive reformers, came to Denver to work with teachers.

—each committee prepared objectives, selected content, designed instructional methods, including questions to ask, and suggested varied projects and materials that their colleagues might wish to use.

—committees revised syllabi after initial classroom trials, further comments from teachers, and extended use in classrooms.

—committees reviewed curriculum test items that were developed by the Department of Measurements for each course of study. 77

In addition, there were a number of specific procedures targeted on involving teachers who were not on committees. Committee members were expected to report to their principal and staff on the revised course of study. Teachers were asked to complete an assessment form after they used the syllabus to critique it. Committees used these replies to revise their course of study. After giving students the curriculum tests, teachers submitted suggestions and concerns over specific items to the Department of Measurements.

Coordinating this complex implementation was the newly established (1925) Department of Curriculum Revision. While all of this sounds as cumbersome as changing clothes under water, the various procedures produced overlapping networks of staff members who saw, spoke, and exchanged information with one another, thereby, increasing professional contacts and a sense of collegiality while reducing greatly the isolation common to a large school system.

Finally, principals were charged to install the new course of study. Each committee and its specialists briefed principals on the revised course and then principals held meetings with their faculties, gradually introducing the syllabus to the school. The message from headquarters was direct.

> In the installation of new courses the principal must be the leader in his school.... The principal must conduct a program of of study and discussion of the new course before it is ready to go into the classrooms of his school.... It is assumed that if a principal takes an unusally long time to get a new course into

> classroom use he will be able to give good reasons for such delay. 78

Seldom made explicit in the entire process was a formal commitment to progressive beliefs and teaching practices. Yet the ideas and pedagogy were never far from the directions and suggestions that top administrators made to staff. Content for courses of study were chosen, for example, on the basis of relevance to "life situations," an ambiguous phrase that produced many tortuous discussions among teachers. In home economics, the committee studied the activities girls did at home and chose content and teaching techniques linked to those activities. Similarly, in each of the academic areas, content was selected that teachers believed were both critical and connected to what students experienced or would face. Latin, for example, a difficult subject at first glance to link to "life situations," made the leap in the 1929 Senior High School Courses of Study:

> It gives power in getting the meaning of new words; aids in spelling; and gives a clearer understanding of much in newspapers, magazines, and literature in general. 79

Newlon, Threlkeld, and advocates of progressivism believed that if content was connected to current and future situations pupils would face and if students saw those links, their interest would be captured and channeled into productive imaginative, school work. A later generation would call it relevance.[80]

Another progressive approach embraced implicitly in curriculum making was the activity and project method. For content and method, this approach included secondary social science courses, so labeled as early as 1919, many elementary school subjects, and literature courses of study. I say "implicitly" because the charge given to all of the subject matter committees contained no explicit directions as to what goals or methods to pursue. But one didn't have to be an educational weatherman to know what was in the air those years.[81]

By 1927, the Denver curriculum revision effort had gained national attention. Requests for the new courses of study poured in. Newlon and Threlkeld spoke to national groups of professionals describing the Denver experience.City after city,including New York and Washington,D.C. copied, in their own fashion, what Denver did. "A scientific masterpiece," A.E. Winship, editor of the Journal of Education, called the new syllabi, comparing them to Horace Mann's Fifth Annual Report. Teachers College professor George Strayer, nationally known expert constantly in demand to direct surveys of school systems,(he studied New York and Washington, D.C. in the 1940s) declared that "Denver has made one of the outstanding contributions to education in America through the development of its curriculum.[82]

Threlkeld succeeded Newlon in 1927 and pursued the same practices including curriculum revision.In 1932 the Progressive Education Association's Commission on the Relation of School and College requested that Denver join their national experiment to reform curricula. The Superintendent and Board readily agreed since it fit neatly into their continuous revision effort. To the request for one high school, Denver asked the Commission to include all five high schools in the experiment. The Commission agreed.[83]

The Eight Year Study

In September, 1933 the Eight Year Study began in each of the five high schools with one class of forty students who volunteered (parental consent was required), were average or above average in achievement, and, according to their junior high counselors,had the capacity to profit from such an experiment.Each succeeding year another class was added. Over the life of the experiment no school had over 30 percent of the student body enrolled in the program. A later generation would call such an innovation a mini-school.

To teach the experimental classes, principals chose two teachers (one English; one social studies) who also served as counselors for the group. Although the program differed in each high school, the "progressive education" classes,as they were labeled, remained together between one to three hours a day depending on what year of the program they were in. For the rest of their daily schedule, students took subjects with their classmates elsewhere in the school.[84]

The schedule for the handful of classes, usually located in a wing of each high school, provided time for key pieces of the experiment. While no two high schools had identical programs, East High School's schedule for 1938 represented the general format and sequence of activities for sophomores enrolled in these classes.

PERIOD	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
1					
2	(classes in rest of school)				
3					
4					
5	special interest groups*	free reading	special interest groups	group counseling	special interest groups
6	CORE		COURSES**		
7	pupils dismissed; teachers' conference	lab	lab	individual counseling	lab***

*

Based upon students' interests in core content, he or she can pursue reading, music, crafts, art, current events, science, dramatics,writing.

**

core courses, initially were English and social studies teachers joined later by art,science, home economics, and industrial arts teachers.

***

Laboratories set up in each room offered individuals or small groups time to meet with the core teachers best qualified to help them. For example, a student working on a project could go to science, art, English, or social studies labs.[85]

The number of teachers directly involved with the experiment remained a minority,but an important one,on the faculty. In 1939,for example,there were twelve out of forty-two (29%) teachers at Manual Training in the program; at North High there were also twelve teachers but this staff was larger (80) and that meant only 15% participated. Also, a number of these teachers had also taken part in previous curriculum revision work.[86]

What was the purpose of this experiment? The Commission established by the PEA sought to enliven the high school curriculum and stir independence and imagination despite the strictures that college requirements placed upon the existing curriculum. With the endorsement of most major universities, the Commission chose thirty public and private secondary schools in which Denver, DesMoines, and Tulsa high schools were included. Participating schools were told: forget college requirements; reconstruct your curriculum and tap the imagination and ingenuity of your students and staff.

Because no central direction was given to the five Denver high schools (and the ten junior highs that joined the experiment in 1938) on what to revise or what methods to use, the first three years saw small groups of students and teachers in each school stumble, innovate,and catch themselves. By 1936,the instructional staff began the task of coordinating basic concepts that were believed to be held in common for high schools. A handbook circulated to staff in that year listed the operating principles and methods to be used by teachers.

.Core teachers are expected to teach the basic knowledge and skills of their fields "insofar as (they) are consistent with teacher-pupil goals;"

.Core teachers are responsible for expanding student interests "and for helping them see relationships in all their work."

.Teachers must replace the existing system of grades and punishment with "new drives for learning."

.In choosing subject matter,only content that "assists in the solving of problems and in the meeting of the needs of pupils" is appropriate.

.Pupils and teachers together plan the work

.Usual subject matter lines "may be ignored."

Team planning, free time for students to pursue interests, study and work in the community, no letter grades, and more operating principles in the Handbook gave guidance to new and experienced teachers in the experiment.[87]

Courses taken by the experimental classes varied. Many were jointly planned; some were not. Some new courses were trendy shifts in title; most were not. After eight years there was little doubt that substantial curriculum revision in content had occurred.

Consider the core program at East High School. Gone were the separate courses in English, American and World History,etc. Instead the teachers chose four areas to concentrate upon:

.personal living
.immediate personal-social relationships
.social-civic relationships
.economic relationships

A sampling of units planned and previously developed by both teachers and pupils that were suggested for use at tenth through twelfth grades were: orientation to the school; understanding one's self; becoming aware of current scene;exploring vocational interests;studying Denver;understanding democracy and the American heritage; studying problems of employment; exploring problems of living in the modern family.[88]

In 1940, the first evaluation report of the Eight Year Study appeared; the experiment was declared a success. Students in these classes, the report stated, did as well in college, and often better than a matched set of students who had completed a conventional program. As intended, curriculum had been revised; students helped reshape courses and their interests were used to explore non-traditional content closely linked to issues that they would face as adults.

Returning to the hurricane metaphor, there is notable evidence of conspicuous, widespread activity occurring at headquarters producing impressive changes in educators' use of language, content in courses of study, teacher professional growth, and the creation of experimental programs within five high schools between 1933-1940. The educational hurricane whipped up the surface and stirred the waters deeply. Did the turbulence touch the ocean floor?

The Classroom

The data are limited for Denver. I located 133 classroom photos and written descriptions for the period. For elementary schools there are 34 classes of which only certain ones provided information for the categories. The graph shows the number of classes for each category. (To review categories, see Table 1 following p. 81). Because the direction of Denver's curriculum revision and experimentation in the interwar period tilted toward the secondary level,* I will concentrate on what teachers did in high schools. Data on 83 high school classes will be supplemented by an examination of specific schools.

The dominant teaching pattern within high school was a teacher, more often than not, instructing the whole group with his or her explanations and questions controlling most of the verbal exchanges with students and classroom activities. Even though classrooms contained movable desks and chairs,the furniture was often arranged in rows facing the teacher's desk and blackboard.Also, there were classes, less than 20% of the total, that had extensive student involvement in group work, pupil choice of tasks and projects, and freedom of movement.

---

* Recall that Newlon and Threlkeld were high school teachers; Newlon was a high school principal prior to Denver; also the bulk of curriculum revision occurred at the secondary level.

Figure 3. PATTERNS OF INSTRUCTION IN DENVER HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOMS, 1920-1940

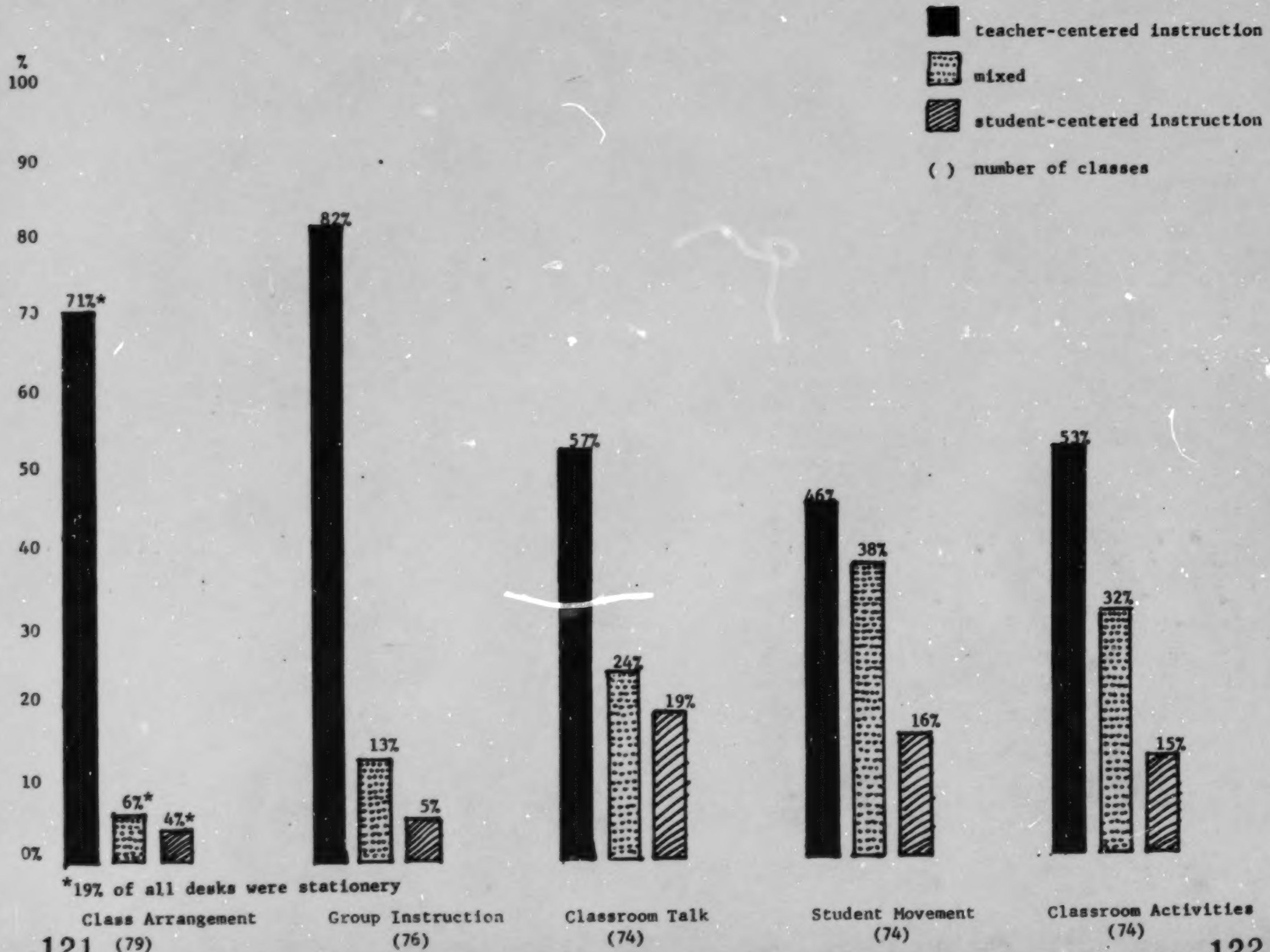
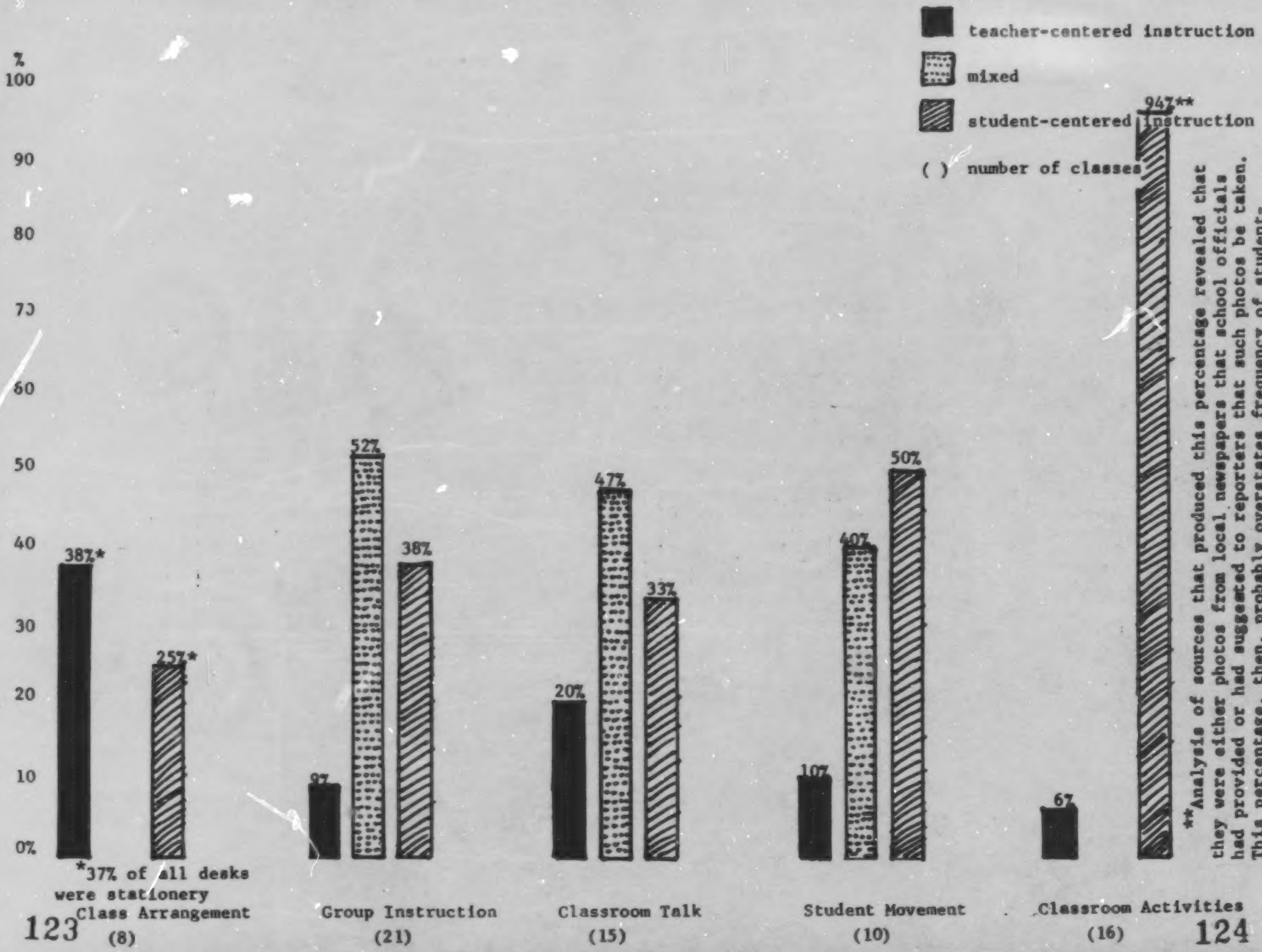


Figure 4. PATTERNS OF INSTRUCTION IN DENVER ELEMENTARY CLASSROOMS, 1920-1940



*37% of all desks were stationery

**Analysis of sources that produced this percentage revealed that they were either photos from local newspapers that school officials had provided or had suggested to reporters that such photos be taken. This percentage, then, probably overstates frequency of student-centered activities.

Compared to the classroom portrait drawn at the turn of the century, drift away from a strict teacher-centered approach is evident in a substantial percentage of classes where student movement occurred. Also in the Mixed Pattern of instruction particular categories reveal teachers using practices that involved students actively in classroom work. Limited as the comparison is note also that in all the categories high school classes show higher percentages of teacher-centered and lower percentages of student-centered behavior than elementary classrooms, precisely the same pattern as New York City.

By examining particular high schools using the available classroom descriptions, student accounts, and teacher reports a more complete map of teaching behavior can be drawn. Recall that in no Denver High School were more than one-third of the staff involved in the Eight Year Study. Hence, what "progressive education" teachers did in their classes located in one wing of the building may or may not be what their peers did elsewhere in the high school. I located twenty written descriptions and photos of experimental classes in the five schools between 1934-1939. I estimate that these twenty classes represent about one-quarter of the teachers who taught experimental classes during these years.* Fourteen teachers (70%) reported or were shown using panel discussions, debates, pupil-teacher planning, and other techniques associated with student-centered patterns of instruction implied in the Eight Year Study. The rest discloses little movement away from the familiar teacher-centered configuration even though they were part of the experimental classes. Read, for example, what Ralph Putnam, East High Latin teacher wrote in an article for Denver teachers in the initial year of the experiment:

> I wish to emphasize ... that nothing very radical is being or will be attempted. We are here to learn Latin and the mastery of Latin will always be our prime objective.

---

* Based upon actual counts taken in yearbooks and master schedule of three high schools.

How, then, he asked, did work with forty "progressive education" students differ from other Latin classes he taught. In reading Caesar's works on the Helvetian War, Putnam said, "the more rapid reading, possible in a special group,enables the pupils to follow more readily the thread of the story and thus to feel the vitality and vigor of the narrative."Moreover, far more attention can be given to the study of English derivatives and extra reading because the class of forty had "extra time," i.e. larger blocks of time in class. Putnam seemed to have been in the minority.[89]

Another view of the core program at East comes from a 1938 report written by tenth graders during the first two semesters they moved through the core classes, labs, special interest groups, etc. A project planned and written by eight students in diary form, they described what it was like to be in a program with 235 students, six teachers three periods a day. As the 235 students moved through the daily schedule they described how they and their teachers planned units, how class members chose activities, pursued their interests independently in core labs, worked in groups on projects,and went into the community on numerous field trips.

> October 3, 1938(second semester of first year in core program)
> We still consider our class very interesting, but we have discovered that it is also quite a bit of work. We must find our references by ourselves, outline our own methods and means of study; use our own initiative throughout our work....
>
> The sixth hour is our regular core period during which we have lectures, reports, motion pictures, or discussions of topics related to our community study. For example, during our study of crime and juvenile delinquency, two films were shown in our classroom. One was a cut from the picture 'Big House,' and the other was a picture of gang life among boys. After the pictures, we had a class discussion on topics concerning the films....
>
> On Thursday the seventh hour is used as a laboratory period. Most of the work on our projects is now done in these periods. There are six of them, covering art, history,human relations,social studies,English, and science and statistics....One girl selected a subject which required interpretation of long tables of statistics. She used several periods in getting help from the math laboratory on interpretation of these

tables.

Nine photos of students working at different classroom activities flesh out the student-written narrative. No teachers appear in the photos.[90]

Another piece of evidence on teaching behavior of those participating in the Eight Year Study comes from surveys in two high schools completed in 1933 and 1940. In the 1933 survey, the first year of the experiment, 16% of the participating teachers chose the word "much" (as opposed to "not at all" or "some") to describe the degree of joint planning they did with students in selecting what to study, class activities, individual projects, and evaluation. By 1940, 53% checked "much," although it is likely that there was turnover among the teachers in the experiment over the eight years.[91]

Finally, in early 1938, Wilford Aiken, Director of the Eight Year Study, visited each of the innovative programs in Denver's five high schools. He met teachers, students, and headquarter administrators. His report concluded that "a real break with the traditional subject-matter" had occurred. Substantial pupil-teacher planning took place. Life in the community had increasingly become a subject of investigation in core classrooms. Moreover, "many of the old recitation techniques are disappearing from the classroom." In some cases, however, the report said that "the socialized discussion that had been substituted for the recitation is being conducted without proper regard for study and research." Bluntly put: "in some classes discussion consists primarily of the pooling of misinformation." Generally complimentary toward the program, the report confirmed that curricular and teaching practices had, indeed, changed.[92]

These fragments of evidence suggest that a majority of teachers participating in the Eight Year Study taught in a manner consistent with the aims of the effort. But not all could drop the baggage of teacher-centered practices, a situation similar to the results disclosed in the formal evaluation of New York City's Activity Program.

Recall now that the graph showed 15% of the teachers introduced student-centered practices into their classroom. Why isn't the figure larger, given the above statement on teachers in the Eight Year Study? First, the program in each high school represented, at most, one out of every four teachers. Second, some of the project teachers (e.g. Latin instructor Ralph Putnam) stood firm in continuing how they taught, even finding it attractive since more time was available and students were bright. Third, the 15% is for the entire set of high school classrooms (83) for the two decades.

When only those classrooms between 1933-1940 are examined (50), the percentage of teachers using student-centered activities increases to 26%, some of whom, as the evaluation of New York's experiment also showed, were teachers outside of the experimental program. Although the dominant teaching pattern remained the same, the extent of student-centered teaching practices increased.

As mentioned earlier, the concept of a core program devoted to exploring youth's interests in the context of problems they would face was extended to ten junior highs in 1938. After the Eight Year Study final evaluation appeared in 1941, Superintendent Charles Greene, who had led the study as Assistant Superintendent, approved the expansion of the core program to all junior and senior high schools by mandating a three year course of study and two years of General Education as a requirement for graduation. Using instructional units that had been developed and polished by high school teachers over the previous eight years, high school sophomores spent one-third of their time in General Education classes; the amount of student time in these classes decreased to one period a day when they were seniors.[93]

By 1943, the graduation requirement was reduced to one year, with the five high schools given an option to design their programs. Shortly after, General Education was transformed into counseling programs. North High School, for instance, had between 15-26 teachers out of a faculty of 80 assigned to General Education classes between 1940-1943; by 1944 when local option was permitted, General Education as a class assignment for teachers disappeared from the master schedule, replaced by such classes as: Diagnostic English, Instructional Communication, Social Living, etc. At East High School, General Education became a tenth grade course required of all students.The class stressed school and vocational guidance. The General Education teacher was also the counselor.[94]

Following the volatile controversy over progressivism in the schools in the late 1940s and early 1950s, a furor that angered Mira Scott Frank, Board of Education member whom I quoted at the beginning of this section, General Education as a course was abandoned three years after Scott left the Board.[95]

WASHINGTON, D.C.

> When the present superintendent of schools took office on July 1, 1920, he knew that the administration of the school system involved many difficulties. Superintendents of other cities told him that it was considered by schoolmen one of the most difficult superintendencies in the United States....
>
> Educational progress in Washington is slow because under the present system of educational control and financial support the needs of the school system are allowed to become acute before consideration is given to improvement and relief then comes altogether too slowly....
>
> Failure on the part of the appropriation power to provide money for progressive educational activities makes an educational system unprogressive.... Failure to provide money for adequate salaries means mediocre teachers and ineffective education. Failure to build enough schoolhouses means overcrowded classes, portables, and poorly adapted rented accomodations, and such conditions make impossible the best teaching....[96]

These statements were made to the District of Columbia Board of Education by their new Superintendent, Frank W. Ballou. Within two years of his appointment Ballou bluntly and concisely scored the divided authority of a Board of Education, District Commissioners, and two Houses of Congress that produced the city's reputation as a graveyard for superintendents. Ballou went on to serve almost a quarter-century (1920-1943), the longest tenure of any Washington superintendent before or since.

Born in 1879 and raised in rural up-state New York, Ballou graduated from a state teacher-training school and taught in rural schools between 1897-1899. By 1904 he had completed a bachelor's degree from Teachers College and decided to move to Ohio, where he earned a master's degree at the University of Cincinnati. While there, he was appointed principal of the University's Technical School and directed it for three years. Switching to the college classroom, he became an assistant professor of education and taught for three years. Returning east, he enrolled at Harvard where he earned a Ph.D in 1914. For his dissertation, he studied how teachers were appointed in urban school systems. The same year he received his degree, the Boston school superintendent asked him to head the Department of Educational Investigation and Measurement, one of the few school districts with a research bureau in the nation. For three years his department administered, analyzed, and reported results from various batteries of intelligence and achievement tests. The cutting edge of progressive practice in testing and the use of tests for grouping students within classes and across curricula found Frank Ballou at the right place and time. In 1917, he was promoted to assistant superintendent and for the next three years helped organize and develop the newest form of school organization—the junior high school. At the age of forty-one, he applied for to the Washington, D.C. vacancy and was named superintendent. Like his Denver colleague, Jesse Newlon, Ballou began his initial three year contract in the summer of 1920.[97]

Within the first decade of his tenure, Ballou had established himself locally as a determined, frank, first-rate administrator unafraid to speak his mind and committed to scientific management as a tool in solving school problems. Nationally, his peers demonstrated their esteem for his talents by electing him President of the Department of Superintendence in 1925. That year he gave an address at the Indianapolis meeting of the NEA on the progress of a science of education since the turn of the century. In Washington he needed every bit of scientific knowledge and talent he possessed.

When Ballou railed at the city's Rube Goldberg governance, his voice joined a growing chorus of criticism against the Organic Act(1906). That law passed by Congress created a nine member Board of Education appointed to administer the largest segregated school system in the country. Unlike other big city school boards, the District Board of Education split its authority (but not responsibility) with three appointed District Commissioners who revised the Board's budget estimates, controlled all expenditures, allocated and audited funds, and purchased school equipment, supplies,etc. In effect, the Board of Education had no independent authority in securing or spending funds, including the purchase of land and the construction of school buildings. Bad as this was from a superintendent's perspective, it got worse when Congress, which appropriated every penny going to the District, in Ballou's words, "reviews, revises, and reduces" item by item, line by line, the school budget--first in the House of Representatives and then in the Senate. If the totals between the two Houses differed a conference committee settled the final amount that went to the schools.

The horror stories of delay, neglect of pressing needs, and confusion were legion to insiders familiar with the byzantine process of securing a budget in the District. In his 1921-1922 annual report, Ballou, using restrained language, detailed all the road blocks he and the Board had to overcome to improve school conditions. To make his case stronger, Ballou drafted United States Commissioner of Education John J. Tigert to testify in behalf of the District schools in the final pages of his report: "... the superintendent is so fettered up with overhead organizations that he is practically impotent, as I see it. I would not take the job at two or three times the salary." Ballou then turned to an "authoritative work on education" prepared by "leading American educators," to describe the organization of the District of Columbia schools. The Cyclopedia of Education minced no words:

> Educational conditions in Washington, from an administrative point of view, are among the worst to be found in any city in the Union, and the school system is behind that of cities elsewhere of equal size.... Until Congress can be made to realize that it is incompetent properly to administer such an undertaking and will give to the Board of Education the power and control which should belong to it there is little hope of a good, modern school system for the District of Columbia. The superintendency of the schools of Washington is generally regarded as one of the most difficult and most undesirable positions in the United States. [98]

In a word much loved by superintendents, Washington schools were a challenge. By 1940, when Ballou formally tallied up the achievements of his administration, he was quite proud in listing changes that he had manuevered through the labyrinth. The conditions he faced in 1920 and the achievements he defined as important in 1940 suggest the directions Ballou traveled in improving a segregated school system in the interwar period.

"School Achievements in Twenty Years," a document Ballou submitted to the Board of Education in 1941, categorized his successes into changes in administration, new buildings, improvements in school organization, and improved supervision and instruction. Out of a 125 page report, 94 pages dealt with streamlining administration, new buildings, and improved teaching conditions (e.g. salaries, retirement, appointments and promotions). Twenty-five pages [illegible] traced improvements in instruction and supervision. Of these pages, most space was devoted to curriculum revision, expanded testing programs, and new grouping procedures—in that order. No mention of teaching methods, project activities, or any concerted effort to introduce progressive practices into classrooms appeared, although a major change had been announced in 1938 with the Child Development Program. Progressive language, however, popped up in numerous places: the formal statement of philosophy produced through curriculum revision between 1938-1940 (printed twice in the report) and a description of what a modern school should be like, sounding almost like it had been lifted from a course description at Teachers College.[99]

The point of all this is to underscore Ballou's aims in administering the District schools. Defining the major issues as the need for more buildings,reorganizing to administer schools efficiently, and navigating the shifting shoals of D.C. and congressional politics, Ballou plowed his energies into dragging the system into the twentieth century. A man who believed deeply in the science of education and the necessity for using it to improve schooling, he was cut from the same cloth as those administrative progressives who redesigned school systems throughout the first decades of the century. On instructional issues, his interests inclined more toward expansion of the junior high program, using tests as tools to distribute students efficiently into appropriate groups, and a tightly-controlled version of curriculum revision. Closer in spirit to New York City's Maxwell, Ettinger, and O'Shea than Denver's Newlon and Threlkeld and Campbell of New York, Ballou left his marks on the organization. On instruction, his fingerprints were less apparent.

The Setting

Let me look first at the conditions within which teachers worked during these decades. A central fact of schooling in the District of Columbia was that there were two separate school systems. In his 1911 report to the Board of Education, Superintendent Alexander Stuart described some of the effects of having a school system segregated by law. With 32% of the students attending black schools separate from whites, costs, he pointed out, would be inevitably higher in a dual school system.

> It is obvious that were it not for the exactions of the race question no city of the size of Washington would consider it necessary or wise to maintain two deputy superintendents, two normal schools, two expensive manual training schools....
>
> A study of the location of school buildings shows that to meet the needs of the white and colored children two smaller buildings have been erected in the same (attendance area) which, under other conditions, would have been merged into one larger building at greatly reduced cost....
>
> Repeated examples are found throughout where a class of white children of a given grade is in one building and another small class of colored children of the same grade is in a nearby building....

> The same causes explain in part the employment of a number of teachers in excess of most cities where white and colored children attend school together.... 100

Turn to class size. Figures reported by the school district were averages; averages conceal important differences in class size. In 1927-1928, for example, out of almost 1200 elementary classes, 29% contained 40 or more students (about equally distributed between white and black schools). School Board policy was to allocate forty students per class "as far as practicable." For classes with less than 30 students, there were 18% (with 85% of those classes containing white students). Thus, 53% of the classes had between 31-39 students. Still even these figures mask differences between black and white classes. In just one decade, differences were marked for elementary classrooms:

YEAR	CLASS SIZE WHITE	CLASS SIZE BLACK
1922	34.3	37.3
1927	34.9	37.9
1932	30.8	36.1

Fifteen years later when Professor George Strayer completed the first comprehensive survey of District schools, the gap had widened: 32.0 for white classes; 39.0 for black.[101]

The buildings and rooms these students and teachers worked in between 8:30-2:30 daily changed substantially over the years. Yet even after the major rebuilding campaign Ballou and the Board of Education manuevered through Congress in 1925, overcrowded, antiquated classrooms remained in far too many buildings across the city, making, in George Strayer's words, "adequate instruction impossible." Over half of the elementary schools were built before 1925. Until the 1940s, classrooms contained long rows of stationary desks which accomodated forty pupils. "Today (1948) with a recommended maximum class enrollment of 30 in the elementary school," Strayer wrote, "many of these classrooms are still too small and a great many of them are crowded...." Bluntly, Strayer said that the "modern Child Development Program" which the District had launched in 1938, "requires informal groupings of children, floor space for constructive activities, cupboards, storage space for supplies...." Even in the newer buildings existing space was inadequate, according to Strayer.[102]

As classroom space changed slowly, so did furniture. In 1920, almost two-thirds of the desks bolted to floors had been in use since the turn of the century. Between 1920-1929, only 200 desks had been replaced. In 1930, the first year of a five year program to replace stationary desks with portable ones, 7000 were replaced. The depression slowed down the conversion drastically. When Strayer's team surveyed classrooms, all elementary schools had installed movable desks and chairs.[103]

Not so for the secondary schools. For those built since 1925 (thirteen of nineteen junior high schools and four of nine high schools) single pedestal desks and other movable furniture had been introduced throughout the 1930s. For Central and Dunbar high schools, constructed in 1916, bolted-down desks sat in rows, class after class, year after year.

While the type of desks were of some importance, what occurred in classrooms often depended upon how teachers allocated time for instruction. For years, teacher received copies of weekly schedules mandating the amount of time they had to spend on each subject. At the secondary school a daily schedule sliced the time into equal segments of 40-50 minutes for each subject. Note that in 1927 elementary teachers, unlike their secondary colleagues, had to teach:

handwriting
language (composition and grammar)
spelling and word analysis
reading and literature
arithmetic
history and civics
geography
elementary science
drawing
music
physical education

For the last four subjects, in the second column, special teachers would give lessons once every three weeks.[104]

For each of these subjects a standard time schedule set the expectation for each grade level. Geography was to be taught ten minutes daily at first grade,increasing to a half-hour at the fourth. Arithmetic was set for thirty-five minutes daily at the first grade and three and a half hours at third and fourth grades, falling to two and a half hours daily at sixth grade. In 1936, another formal time schedule was adopted by the Board of Education that varied the time allotments slightly. When the Strayer team visited schools in 1948, they found that the time schedule adopted twelve years earlier was still being followed although the Child Development Program, initiated in 1938, called for different chunks of time for clusters of subjects.[105]

Just because a time schedule was approved by a school board did not mean that teachers followed in lock-step the expected standards. Many didn't. A number of teachers and principals, how many I cannot estimate, intent upon installing activity programs in their classrooms, departed from the schedule simply because it straitjacketed the flexibility essential for informal classrooms. From a first grade classroom, the teacher-printed daily schedule read:

OUR BIG PLAN TODAY

1. Look and see our trailer. The boys made it.
2. Let's go for a story ride.
3. Let's read our new story.
4. Let's play hot potato.
5. Have you done a reading card?
6. Let's be happy.[106]

While such primary classrooms used flexible schedules and departed from the approved one, such approaches were uncommon. Teachers, indeed, differed in how much time they spent on reading, arithmetic, and geography but most diverged within a range that was implicitly recognized as reasonable. After all, the organizational signals to teachers and principals were plain. The Superintendent's words accompanying the time schedule available to each teacher left little to interpretation: "Every officer and teacher in the elementary schools shall consider himself governed by this weekly schedule," and principals were expected to inspect teachers' plans to "know that each teacher is observing the distribution of time...." Furthermore, District teachers' instructional day was a half-hour shorter than most districts of comparable size (five hours compared to five and a half hours) which, I suspect, generated pressure upon teachers to cover the crowded curriculum by following the prescribed time allotments.[107]

The point is that an outdated Board-approved time schedule was ill-fitted for a new program, especially one that was directed toward producing a flexible classroom where teachers and pupils jointly planned tasks. Such a mix-up suggests, at worst, a bureaucratic oversight, or more probably, the existence of mixed feelings toward the new effort. Classroom teachers, less adventurous and experimental than some colleagues who leaped upon the progressive bandwagon, would probably think twice before embarking upon a revised time schedule, given the shorter day and directives of the superintendent, especially so if their principal lacked enthusiasm for the new venture.

Mixed signals also marked the curriculum revision efforts begun by Ballou in 1925 and fitfully carried forward into the 1930s. As a noted member of the NEA's Department of Superintendence, Ballou served on its curriculum commission and chaired the committee that revised the elementary science course of study which Washington administrators and teachers wrote.

The product was published in the 1926 Yearbook of the Department of Superintendence. The course of study was approved by the Board of Education that year.[108]

In the same year, Ballou appointed committees to revise arithmetic, reading and literature, English, and geography courses of study. At least three major organizational differences separated Ballou from Denver's Newlon and Threlkeld in approach. First, while teachers were assigned to committees, District administrators chaired these groups until the late 1930s when an occasional teacher was chosen to direct a committee's work. Second, the committees began their work after 3:00, on the teacher's time. Third, no specialists were hired to help the committees nor was any training given to committees on how to write objectives or a course of study.[109]

Similarities with curriculum development efforts in Denver existed, of course. Teachers did participate. Progressive vocabulary and references to activity methods studded the syllabi. Inservice education for teachers increased. Networks of like-minded professionals developed. All of this somehow occurred in a slow-motion fashion unlike the Denver experience. Delays in production of courses of study were common. Because the work occurred after school hours the process stretched out over years. Finally, teachers began to object to committee work between 3:00-5:00 since other cities provided substitutes to relieve staff from work. Nonetheless, by 1940 seven elementary courses of study, (nineteen in the junior high, four in vocational schools, and twenty-one in senior highs) were published. And teachers were expected to use them. Did they?[110]

This question refocuses attention again on the classroom. How did District teachers teach? How extensive were progressive practices in white and black classrooms from Anacostia to Georgetown? The conditions described so far suggest some crude boundaries for a few answers. As in New York, but less than in Denver, classroom space and furniture presented more obstacles than opportunities for teachers to use progressive practices. Of course, the physical environment didn't prevent use of small groups, pupil-teacher planning, activity units, and project work but for those teachers barely willing to experiment, the lack of space and cumbersome furniture, in addition to difficulties in securing supplies may well have discouraged them from trying. Also with over 35 students in a class, incentives to work in small groups and with individuals, to prepare extra materials, and to beg for materials were dulled.

Another constraint was time. Already mentioned was the five hour instructional day in which seven to ten subjects were to be taught Subtract opening exercises (Bible reading, collecting money, taking attendance) and recess and add teacher concern for covering the prescribed subjects, particularly in view of an unexpected principal visit. The results are sharper limits upon introducing new instructional practices.

Another line of reasoning is to ask what organizational mechanisms supported diffusion of progressive teaching practices. Clearly, a curriculum revision process, wired into a local and national network of similarly inclined professionals, helped. While the District's organizational linkages were hardly as systematic or carefully crafted as Denver's, yet one would reasonably expect that a number of teachers and principals either were captured by the child-centered notions embedded in pedagogical progressivism or, already converted, found enough green lights from headquarters to move ahead on their own.

Also teacher institutes, funded in part by private contributions from administrators and teachers, brought locally and nationally known professionals to lecture staff (Blacks meeting at Dunbar and whites at Central) on varied topics. Throughout the 1920s teachers heard from W. W. Charters (University of Chicago) on curriculum revision, Florence Bamberger (John Hopkins) on classroom efficiency, Elbert Fretwell (Teachers College) on organizing social activities for junior and senior high schools, Laura Zirbe (Lincoln School, Teachers College) on progressive reading programs. In addition, teachers met monthly, again in separate schools, to study current issues. Often done in a lecture format with either a guest or the assistant superintendent delivering the talk, topics in these compulsory meetings included the activity method, adapting courses of study to projects,etc.[111]

Another important condition supporting the spread of progressive ideas into classrooms was the teacher's level of education. The assumption is that the higher the level of formal schooling, the higher the awareness of modern trends in education, particularly if the schooling was recently acquired, and therefore, a greater willingness to alter one's teaching behavior.A pinch of skepticism suggests these assumptions are open to debate. School officials, however, implicitly accepted the the premise and seldom questioned it. In 1931, 78% of high school teachers had at least a bachelor's degree; 96% of elementary teachers had from two to three years of Normal School training or a bachelor's. The last figure is difficult to sort out until later when Strayer's survey (1948) found that 61% of elementary school teachers were college graduates. By 1948, 78% of the entire staff were college graduates. Among elementary teachers, more Blacks had bachelors' degrees than whites (74% to 61%) while the reverse occurred among senior high teachers (85% of Black teachers were college graduates; 93% of whites were). Teachers also reported to Strayer when they last received their professional training. Within the previous five years (1943-1948), 55% of the teachers had taken courses; 29%

had taken their last training between 1933-1942 and 16% had not taken a course since they had been appointed.[112]

A review of those organizational characteristics that permit and limit the introduction of progressive practices into the classroom offer crude pointers but no direct evidence drawn from classrooms. Turn now to teachers in classrooms.

In The Classroom

That Black and white teachers used progressive methods to varying degrees is undeniable. A group of Black administrators appointed by Assistant Superintendent Garnet Wilkinson to create the Department of Research and Measurement for Divisions 10-13, consisting of all the Black schools, was designed and implemented in a five month experiment at Mott School and an unnamed "traditional" school in 1924. The aim of the experiment was to compare the effects of progressive education upon both teachers and students. The new approaches used in the eight grade school included the testing of students, new textbooks, additional materials, and movable furniture for grades 1-4. Teachers were encouraged to convert the formal course of study into projects. Mott teachers overwhelmingly approved the experiment, according to a survey: 74% said projects produced superior results with their students; 94% found students' interests in projects superior to usual school work, etc.[113]

Occasional articles in the Journal of the Columbian Educational Association, a publication written by and for Black educators in District schools, corroborated interest in progressive schooling. Miss Mayme Lewis of Bruce School reported in a 1925 issue the details of her two day visit to the third and fourth grades of Horace Mann, a New York City progressive private school at Teachers College. At the Monroe Demonstration School, an adjunct to Miner Teachers College, a number of teachers in concert with their student-teachers, introduced and maintained classroom centers, small-group work, joint teacher-pupil planning, etc. Finally, another piece of indirect evidence is the annual exhibit of elementary school activities where Black teachers presented projects their classes had produced.[114]

Unfortunately, I have no way of assessing how widespread these practices were in Divisions 10-13. In issues of the Journal, for each article describing an activity-centered classroom, three others laid out exemplary lesson plans revealing teacher direction and control at each step of the plan without a hint of student involvement other than answering teacher questions.[115]

A similar problem surfaces in determining the extent of progressive practices in the white schools (Division 1-9). That schools and certain teachers introduced progressive methods in their classrooms goes without question. Articles in national professional journals (Childhood Education 1932 and 1933; Progressive Education 1936; Grade Teacher 1939) featured classes in Petworth and Ketcham schools constructing railroad stations, studying Mexican life, and painting. The Washington Post and other local papers carried articles on classroom projects. Julia Hahn, an elementary school supervisor, deeply involved in San Francisco schools' progressive efforts prior to her coming to Washington, worked directly with teachers and wrote articles on the activity movement in District schools. I found it difficult to assess how far these practices had spread in schools and to what extent teachers selected which ideas to convert into classroom techniques.[116]

The only appraisal of the diffusion of progressive methods in the District schools took place in 1948 when George Strayer brought his team to Washington, at the Board of Education's request, to determine, among other things, how much of the Child Development Program had been implemented in classrooms.

The program was equally as ambitious, but far less systematically implemented than either New York City's Activity Program or Denver's Eight Year Study. Ballou's formal effort at installing progressive education contained all the conventional vocabulary about "child-centered activity program" spreading throughout District schools, pushing out the "traditional ... subject-centered program." Classrooms were to become places where children shared in planning the work, assumed responsibilities for both room and school duties, and studied actively the family, neighborhood, city, and nation. Projects, centers, movable furniture, activity periods, crafts--the often-quoted repertoire that pedagogical progressives sought in public schools were central to the Child Development Program.[117]

Headquarters' supervisors and principals were charged to establish activity programs in the schools. Some schools, building on the cadre of teachers who had experimented earlier with projects and centers, embraced the Superintendent's charge with great enthusiasm. Most schools, pinned to existing practice, heeded the words of the Superintendent but did not, or could not, apparently institute the entire program.

Strayer's team had as one of its objectives, assessing the degree that the program initiated in 1938 had been implemented a decade later. He found "many" classrooms that had met both the letter and spirit of the Superintendent's mandate, in spite of numerous and enervating obstacles, errors, and just plain poor judgments made by school officials that either frustrated, or worse, contradicted Ballou's announced direction. Strayer added them up:

> .teachers were not given time or resources to produce new curricula for the new program. This was a "serious error."
>
> .only one new unit (math) was produced for teachers to use

in the new effort in ten years.

.rooms lacked space, cabinets, equipment; teachers lacked textbooks and instructional materials.

.short school day

.large classes

.teachers lacked preparation for change.[118]

Too many teachers held fuzzy notions of what the program was intended to do and what they had to do specifically, i.e. what am I supposed to do Monday morning? Strayer divided District elementary teachers into two groups: those with "the child-development philosophy with its emphasis upon the whole child and upon purposive learning" and those with the "traditional" stress upon mastery of facts and skills. As with all such arbitrary categories within the survey, Strayer offered no specific numbers, only such vague words as "many." Hence, determining the spread of the program is less easily done.[119]

The closest Strayer comes to estimating diffusion of the program is when he described how four staff members visited all elementary schools,and spoke with teachers, principals, and supervising directors. Based upon these discussions and observations, they rated the schools they saw as Superior, Good, Fair, and Poor. Unlike the Morrison survey of New York's Activity Program in 1940 where scales were constructed, verified for validity and reliability, observers were trained, and data carefully sifted, Strayer's team judged a school Superior,

> if the program was designed to fit the needs of the children, the purposes of teachers and pupils were clear, there was a well organized program of child development activities, an effective instructional program dealing with fundamental knowledges, understandings and skills, and a community program which secured the interests and cooperation of parents on the education of their children. 120

These observers found 19% of all elementary schools Superior; 35.7 Good; 27% Fair; and 18.2% Poor. Only by a courageous,inferential leap can one conclude that Child Development Programs existed in more than half of the District schools, that is, by adding those schools rated Superior and Good. Not only would such a leap be courageous, it would be precarious given the ambiguous and multiple criteria the observers used, the probable differences among them in making judgments on such loosely-defined items, and, finally, the obvious fact that within a school, differences among teachers exist as they do between schools, e.g. New York City's Activity Program.[121]

Adding up Strayer's observations of the organizational obstacles to the program's implementation and his statements of how spottily the Child Development Program was executed, the picture that emerges is one of uncertain, unsystematic, and jig-saw implementation in District elementary schools.

Some help in determining the spread of progressive practices comes from the fifty-three classroom descriptions (of which twenty were elementary classes) I collected for Washington. The graph illustrates that student-centered teaching patterns appear in slightly more than one of three elementary classrooms. The numbers, however, are small and offer little more confidence than Strayer's team judgments of individual school quality. Combining the pieces of data, individually flawed as they are, with the contextual conditions described earlier both pieces suggest that progressive teaching practices, as defined by the Child Development Program, penetrated a minority of the District's classrooms, although that minority may be as small as one-quarter or as large as one-third. Equally as plausible is an inference that certain progressive practices were adopted to varying degrees by substantial numbers of District elementary teachers, further broadening the numbers of teachers who expanded their range of techniques. Yet, saying all of this in conditional and careful language still leaves one fact undisturbed: teacher-centered instructional patterns

Figure 5. PATTERNS OF INSTRUCTION IN WASHINGTON, D.C. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOMS, 1920-1940

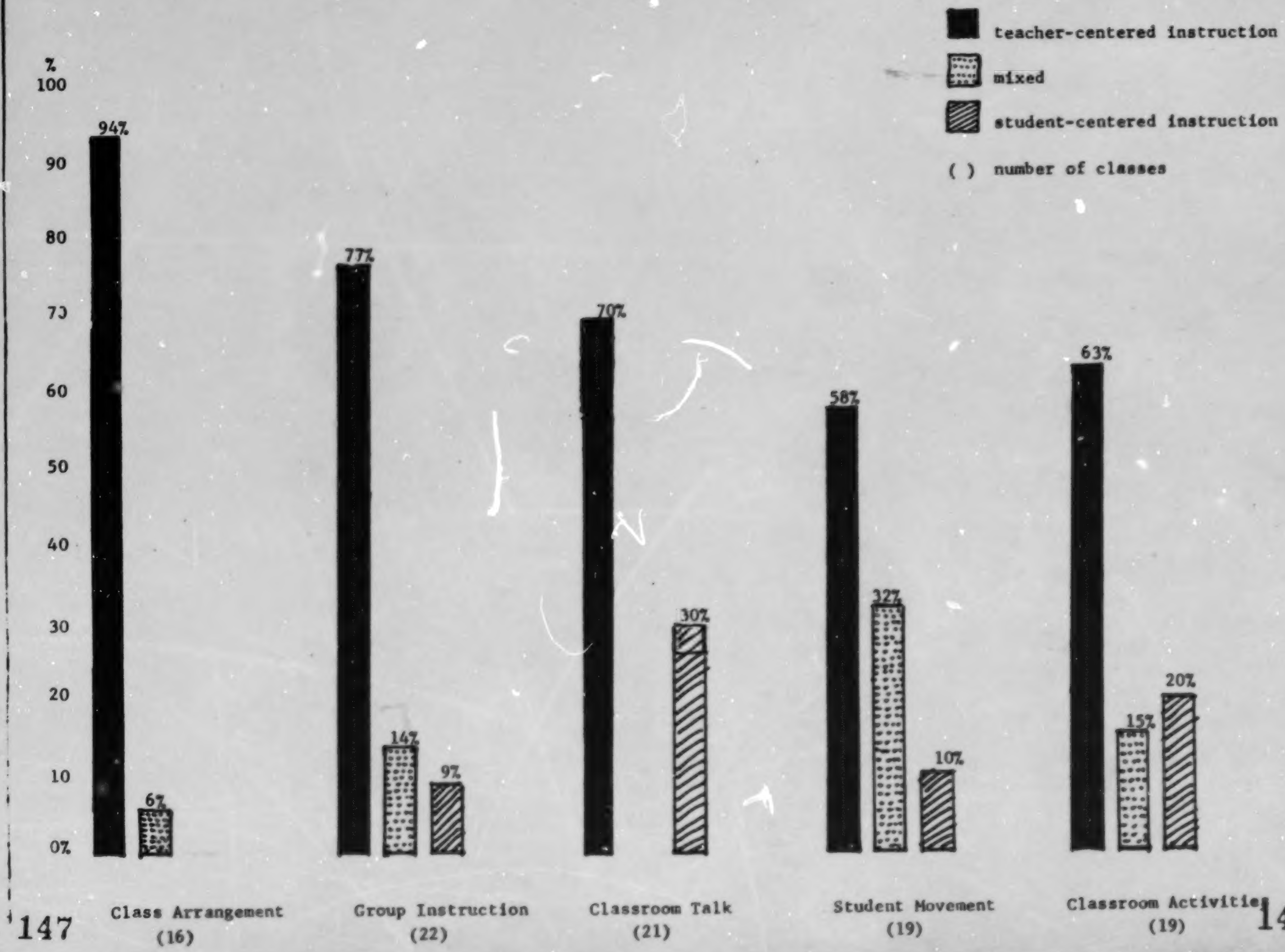
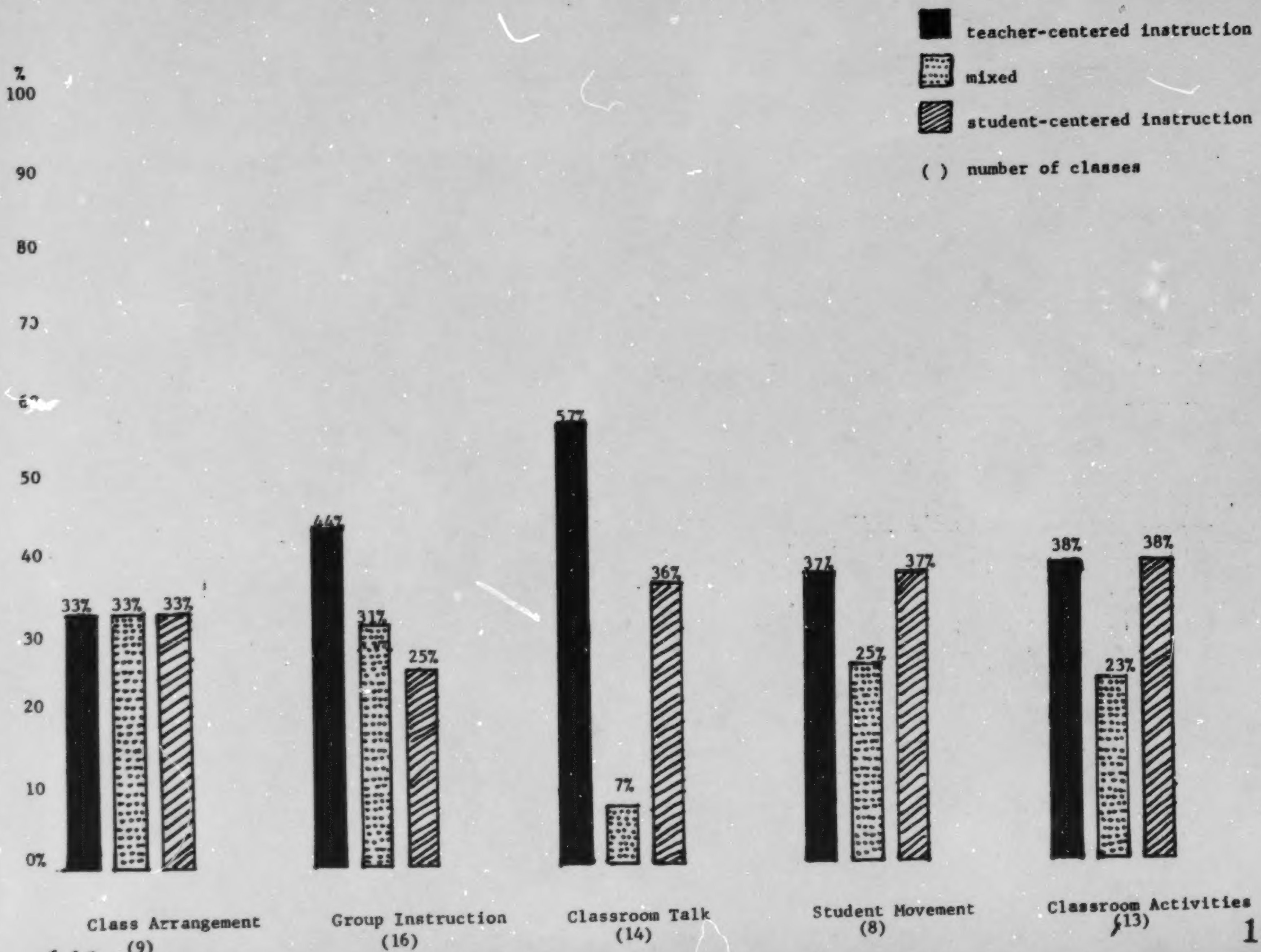
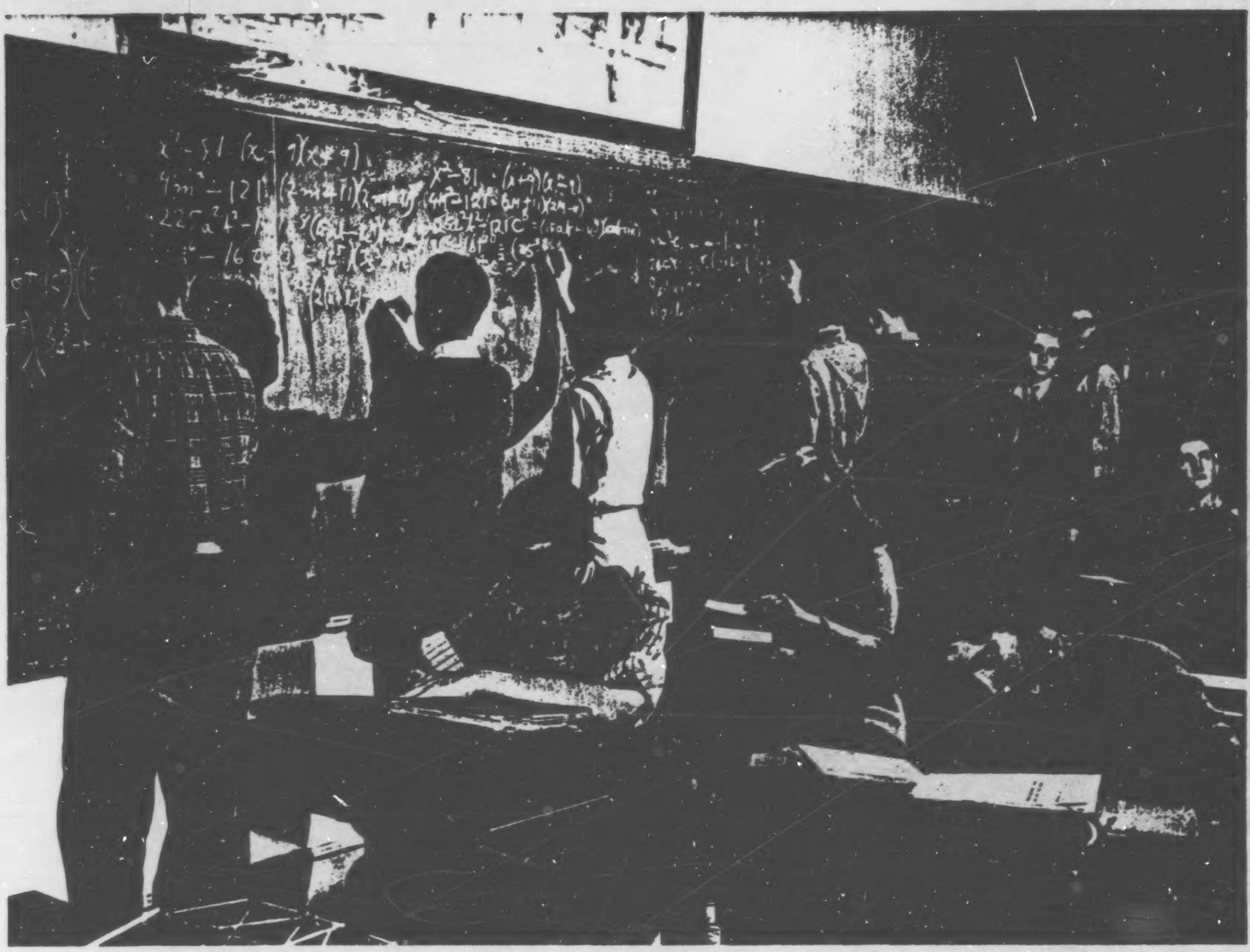


Figure 6. PATTERNS OF INSTRUCTION IN WASHINGTON, D.C. ELEMENTARY CLASSROOMS, 1920-1940



Washington, D.C. Black Elementary School, 1942 (Library of Congress)



Washington, D.C. High School, Algebra Lesson at Woodrow Wilson High School, 1943 (Library of Congress) prevailed in elementary classrooms.

Turn now to the high school. The graph shows patterns similar to New York and Denver in that for every category teacher-centered practices at the high school exceed percentages for those practices in elementary classrooms. Drawn from the graph is a profile of a high school teacher teaching four to five classes daily, facing rows of students sitting in desks. Three out of four times, the teachers instructed the entire group, talked most of the time, and permited little student-initiated movement within the room. One way to corroborate that profile is to take a closer look at some District high schools, white and Black.

Consider the predominately academic Central High School. Perched on a hill overlooking the Capitol, Washington Monument, and downtown, Central's reputation for a splendid view of the city began when it opened its doors of the new building to white students in 1916.

Both J. Edgar Hoover, subsequently Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation for a half-century, and Helen Hayes, soon to become a world-renowned actress, were Central students and must have read the student handbooks that described school rules, curricula requirements for graduation, daily schedule, extracurricular activities, and school cheers. Take the 1926 Handbook. Every student was to go to his or her section (homeroom) for opening exercises by 8:55 A.M. "In classrooms absolute quiet must prevail at this time," the handbook stated, because the students must have the "proper attitude" and "frame of mind necessary to start the day right." At 9:10 the bell rang to start the student's seven period day—"six recitation periods" and lunch. In four minutes, students were to move from one class to another. A rich array of activities were available at the end of the day including the chance to write for the Brecky, the senior yearbook, the Journal, a literary review begun in 1886, and the Bulletin, a weekly newspaper. A glimpse into classrooms appeared in the weekly.[122]

From the *Bulletin*, beginning in 1925 when a section called "Class Notes" began until 1938 when the column lapsed, students wrote items on what certain teachers did in their rooms. From these "Class Notes" I identified 302 descriptions of teaching activities for 55 English, social studies, science, math, and foreign language teachers. Almost half of the teachers were in the English department; one-quarter in social studies; one-fifth in foreign language and the remainder in science.

Student reporters noted unusual items about teachers' classrooms:

1. Instances of student participation in class recitation.

   November 24, 1925. In Miss Florence Jayne's English class "various pupils, or monitors as they are called, record the attendance, test the rest of the class, read the questions from the true and false tests."

   April 2, 1930. In Miss Alice Clark's Latin class "at each lesson some member of the class acts as teacher.... One of the pupils called on Miss Clark to answer one of the questions."

2. Classroom activities that departed from the routine, e.g. field trips, lantern slides, radio programs, outside speakers, panel discussions, acting out scenes from novels and plays,etc.

   December 17, 1930. Miss Bessie Whitford's sixth period English class debated the merits of high school fraternities.

   October 20, 1932. Mr. DeShazo's third period chemistry class "performed their first experiment by themselves.... They made oxygen and found its properties."

   January 19, 1933. Miss Gill's fourth year French class held "a bridge party with the players speaking only French...."

   March 9, 1933. Miss Alma Boyd's second period English class presented the *Vicar of Wakefield* through a simulated radio broadcast.

3. Unusual class activities where students determined what they study, worked in groups, and created projects.

   March 16, 1932. Students in Miss Ruth Denham's second period class made replicas of the Globe Theatre--"The theatre will be about large enough to place on a card table."

   February 15, 1934. Freshman Biology students in Miss E.C. Faul's class "are working on projects of practical application. Allowed to pick any topic in which they are interested, some students have chosen dish gardens, sprouting seeds, etc."

November 17, 1938. Florence Jayne's classes "voted for and attained certain changes in the teacher's system of marking."

In analyzing the 302 classroom activities from 55 teachers I found that fifteen English and four history teachers captured two-thirds of all activities that involved student participation, as reported by the student newspaper—or about one-fourth of the entire faculty in the mid-1930s. Of course, the total sample of teachers is selective reflecting classes that student reporters heard about, which classes they took,etc. The point, however, is that within this sample there were a variety of approaches among teachers using progressive practices.

Viewed this way, I found that less than 10% of all activities reported by students in these classes included joint student-teacher planning, a revised course content related to current and future student needs, students leading a recitation or discussion, and committee work on projects--the usual teaching practices associated with pedagogical progressivism. Activities involving students undertaken by a substantial number of Central teachers stayed within a narrow band, e.g. student reports, debates, acting out scenes, and leading discussions (80%)--all were determined by the teacher and linked to required content or text. The evidence, strong and clear, is that even among the minority of Central faculty who chose to use student participation to refresh existing content and instruction, the dominant mode of instruction was teacher-centered.[123]

Instruction at Central, then, except for a small group of teachers described in a student newspaper over a decade, was seemingly tied to large-group instruction, use of texts, question-answer exchanges initiated and controlled by the teacher, scant student movement and participation--all within classrooms arranged in rows of desks facing the blackboard and teacher's desk.

Travelling down the hill on Thirteenth Street toward the White House, taking a left at O Street, and going another dozen blocks, a visitor would have reached the steps of Dunbar, the Black academic high school. In 1870 when it opened its doors to four Black students in a church basement, it was the first Black high school in the nation. Dunbar moved into a new building the same year as Central did. New or not, compared to Central, Dunbar classes were larger, books were frayed, materials were fewer, furniture was scarred by years of use, and, in the words of a teacher who wrote lovingly of her school, even "the blackboards were cracked with confusing lines resembling a map." Yet this was the school that produced, as Thomas Sowell noted, the first Black general (Benjamin O. Davis), the first Black Cabinet member (Robert C. Weaver), the first Black federal judge (William Hastie), the first Black senator since Reconstruction (Edward W. Brooke), and the discoverer of blood plasma (Charles Drew).[124]

Dunbar's purpose was clear: prepare students for college. Drawing from a pool of Black students from across the city, the faculty, many of whom had earned advanced degrees from northern and eastern universities,set high standards for behavior and academics. They shared a belief in the "Talented Tenth," a cadre of educated Blacks who would provide leadership to the race. Equalling and exceeding whites in knowledge, skills, and gentility was gospel among believers in this faith.[125]

From the 1924-1925 Crimson and Black student handbook, for example, rules for English students were explicit: "Write all lesson assignments in your notebooks. As you have at least three other lessons to prepare daily, do not attempt to trust your memory." For history classes students were warned: "To study history intelligently the student should follow the suggestions of the teacher as to the keeping of notebooks, map work, collateral reports and wider reading." Advice in the form of twelve rules for studying (with Nihil Sine Labore as a sub-title) were listed prescribing the kind of light and space at home that would be adequate. Also included were "Hints for Dunbar Boys and Girls e.g. for girls, "silks, chiffons, georgettes, satins have no place in your wardrobe"; for boys, "Wear ties, socks, and shirts of quiet colors. Don't let them be conspicuous and showy. Keep your shoes cleaned and polished." Rules for entering and leaving classrooms were stated with unmistakable clarity: "No talking or unnecessary moving about is to be allowed after the bell has sounded."[126]

The daily schedule of seven periods with bells punctuating changes in classes, except for those occasions when the electric bells broke down, were the same as at Central, although the teacher load and class sizes ran higher at the Black than at the white high school. The academic courses of study and texts were the same including the one piece of required work in the senior year that drove students to parody in their yearbooks and literary journals--Edmund Burke's "On Conciliation With America."[127]

What happened in Dunbar classrooms within a context of clear and precise student expectations for academic work and behavior and a faculty with a high level of academic training facing, from behind the teacher's desk, classes of 35 or more students five or six times daily in row after row of bolted-down desks, can only be inferred. Few descriptions of classrooms were available. What these scattered photos, student newspaper items, yearbook vignettes, and official reports show are instances of project work, student participation in classwork (e.g. reports, debates,etc.) within a larger framework of teacher-centered patterns of instruction.

Harriet Riggs, English and History Department Head for Armstrong and Dunbar high schools, reported in 1920 that in English "the socialized recitation was found valuable in teaching pupils how to think and how to study.... By this method of recitation each child contributed his part and learned to work for the welfare of the group." In all history classes, she continued, "emphasis was placed upon geography and map study. In many classes both teachers and pupils collected pictures and clippings bearing on the subjects studied. Constant effort was made to show the connection the past and present." Senior English classes of Miss Howard and Mr. Hill did individual projects on eighteenth century England, creating their versions of magazines like the Spectator, models of villages, murals, etc. The photos of English and Spanish showed familiar patterns of teachers talking to the entire class; one photo of a chemistry class shows the teacher conducting an experiment in front of the room and the students standing in a half-circle around him watching. Data are few for Dunbar. Only partial inferences are appropriate given the skimpiness of the evidence.[128]

Until an intensive recovery of more classroom descriptions of Dunbar teachers occurs, little more than informed impressions can be offered now. These impressions and partial inferences, laced with tentativeness, link easily with the patterns revealed at Central High School and the set of other descriptions from high schools elsewhere in the city. As tentative as all of this is, a student essay on what happened in 1942 when the electric bells went out of order at Dunbar gives us a peek at the reality that somehow keeps dancing beyond the available evidence.[129]

CLOCK TROUBLE

> ...When the Dunbar clocks are out of order, the efficient school curriculum of Dunbar no longer exists (Long Live Clock Trouble!)
>
> The weary janitors climb the stairs and clang the ancient 'cow bell' which sends children springing from their seats, dashing down the hall, and puffing into their next hour class only to find that the class before has not heard the bell and they will have to return to the class they had left. After they have returned, the teacher proceeds with the lesson just in time to be interrupted by the bell and leave the homework unassigned. (Ah, a good night's sleep for once!) [130]

NOTES

[1] Agnes DeLima, *Our Enemy The Child*, (New York: New Republic, 1925), pp. 21-31. All quotes were taken from DeLima's observation. The classroom setting and description were paraphrased.

[2] Tyack, pp. 182-198; Michael Katz, *Class, Bureaucracy, and Schools*, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), pp. 117-120; Cremin, pp. 179-239; See also Patricia Graham, *Progressive Education: From Arcady to Academe*, (New York: Teachers College Press, 1967), chapter 4; Sol Cohen, *Progressives and Urban School Reform*, (New York: Teachers College, Bureau of Publications, 1964), chapters 1-4; C.A. Bowers, *The Progressive Educator and the Depression*, (New York: Random House, 1969), chapters 1-4.

[3] Graham, p.46.

[4] Graham, chapters 3-4; DeLima, chapters 4, 9; Cremin, pp. 201-234.

[5] *Time*, October 31, 1934, p. 31.

[6] Cremin, pp. 305, 307.

[7] Joel Spring, *Education and the Rise of the Corporate State*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), pp. 49-61.

[8] Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Captalist America*, (New York: Basic Books, 1976), pp. 43, 181, 200.

[9] Katz, pp. 113-125.

[10] Tyack, pp. 126-198.

[11] Ibid., pp. 197-198.

[12] Arthur Zilversmit, "The Failure of Progressive Education, 1920-1940," in Lawrence Stone (ed.) *Schooling and Society*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1976), pp. 252-261.

[13] Ibid.

[14] New York (City) Board of Education, *Thirty-Second Annual Report of*

the Superintendent of Schools, (New York: Board of Education, 1930), p.485; New York (City) Board of Education, *The First Fifty Years: A Brief Review of Progress, 1898-1948*, (New York: Board of Education, 1949), p. 86; the last two comparisons with the size of the school system are mine.

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Cohen, *Progressives and Urban School Reform*; Diane Ravitch, *The Great School Wars: New York City, 1805-1973*, (New York: Basic Books, 1974); Diane Ravitch and Ronald Goodenow (eds.) *Educating An Urban People: The New York City Experience*, (New York: Teachers College Press, 1981).

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On Maxwell as Superintendent, see Samuel P. Abelow, *Dr. William H.* Maxwell, The First Superintendent of Schools of the City of New York, (New York: Scheba Publishing Co., 1934); Selma C. Berrol, "William Henry Maxwell and a New Educational New York," *History of Education Quarterly*, 8, (1968), pp. 215-228; Ravitch, pp. 111-186.

18
Who's Who in America, 1920-1921, (Chicago: Marquis Co., 1921), 11, p. 895; *The First Fifty Years*, p. 92; Cohen, p. 110.

19
New York (City) Board of Education, *Thirtieth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools*, (New York: Board of Education, 1928), p. 53.

20
See New York (City) Board of Education, *Progress of the Public Schools, 1924-1929*, (New York: Board of Education, 1929); William O'Shea, "What Are The Progressive Steps of the New York City Schools," *Educational Review*, 74, (1927), pp. 99-103.

21
Cohen, pp. 129-132.

22
Cohen, pp. 159-160. While it is beyond the scope of this study, Campbell's embrace of the Activity Program remains an intriguing puzzle that deserves exploration, i.e. why does a Superintendent who characterized himself as an educational conservative in the midst of retrenchment decide to launch the largest experiment ever undertaken to reform the elementary public school curriculum and instruction?

23
C.B.J. Snyder, "A Stupendous Schoolhouse Problem," *American School Board Journal*, 66, (February, 1923), pp. 59-61; also see same journal, volume 65, (October, 1922), pp. 60-61.

24
New York Times, May 18, 1930, p. 9.

25
New York (City) Board of Education, *All The Children, 1935-1936*, (New

York: Board of Education, 1936), p. 120; *All The Children, 1942-1943*, p. 30.

[26] New York (City) Board of Education, *Thirty-Third Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools, 1930-1931* (New York: Board of Education, 1931), p. 615.

[27] Harold Campbell, "Class Sizes in New York City," *The School Executive*, 55, (December, 1935), p. 139; *Thirty-Eight Annual Report, 1935-1936*, p.83.

[28] *Report of Survey of Public School System, City of New York, 1924*, (New York: Board of Education, 1929), p. 306.

[29] Ibid., pp. 1265-1292.

[30] Ibid., pp. 1292-1296, 1309.

[31] *The First Fifty Years*, pp. 94-95.

[32] O'Shea, "Progress of Public Schools," pp. 29-31; *The First Fifty Years*, p. 95; "Report of the Investigation of Regents Examinations by the First Assistants' Committee," *High Points*, 21, (December, 1939), pp. 14-29; "Report of the Regents Examination Committee," *High Points*, 22,(April, 1940),pp.8-16.

[33] *Twenty-Eighth Annual Report, 1925-1926*, pp.176-177.

[34] New York (City) Board of Education, junior high school report card, 1925; *The Handbook of Evander Childs High School, 1927-1928*, pp. 124.

[35] *High Points*, 3, (December, 1921), pp. 30-31; *Teachers Manual of Julia Richman High School,1924*, p. 2; *Practical Suggestions For Teachers*, (Bronx), 1926, pp. 28-31; *High Points*, 12, (October, 1930), pp. 52-55; *High Points*, 14, (April, 1932), pp. 44-48; Theodore Huebner, "Suggested Standards in the Supervision of Foreign Languages," *High Points*, 21, (November, 1939), pp. 7-10.

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[39] *Survey, 1924*, pp. 841-849.

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[41] The comparison with driving and rules for the road comes from Rebecca Barr and Robert Dreeben, "Instructionin Classrooms," in Lee Shulman (ed.) *Review of Research in Education*, (Itasca, Illinois: F.E. Peacock Publishers, 1977), p. 114.

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[44] John Loftus, "The Nature of the Activity Program," mimeo, September 9, 1936, p. 2.

[45] *New York Times*, July 9, 1941.

[46] Loftus, *Progressive Education*, p. 117.

[47] Arthur Jersild, et. al. "Studies of Elementary School Classes in Action," *Journal of Experimental Education*, 9, (June, 1941), pp. 299, 301.

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[49] Jersild, December, 1939, p. 196.

[50] *The Activity Program: Report of a Survey*, p. 41.

[51] Ibid., p. 47.

[52] Ibid., p. 41

[53] Ibid., p. 53.

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[55] J. Cayce Morrison, "The Curriculum Experiment With the Activity Program: Its Implications for the Further Study of Education," in *New York Society for Experimental Study of Education Yearbook*, (New York: Thesis Publishing Co., 1943), p. 28; *All The Children, 1940-1941*, p. 62.

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[65] Ibid., pp. 31-39.

[66] Mira Scott Frank, "Dedication of Valverde Elementary School," mimeo, 1951, n.p.

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[84] See chapter on Denver schools in Thirty Schools, pp. 146-212 and Harold Spears, The Emerging High School Curriculum (New York: American Book Co., 1940), pp. 243-273.

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CHAPTER 3

THE NATIONAL MAP: RURAL AND URBAN SCHOOLS, 1920-1940

A Hillsdale County (Michigan) teacher in a one-room school wrote her superintendent in 1939 of the changes she had initiated in her classroom since attending a summer session on a scholarship from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Leona Helmick reported what she had done at Grubby Knoll School.

> School began one September morning. Enrollment was taken. Classes were called by a 'tap' (Children turn in their seats), 'tap' (children rise from their seats), and 'tap' (children pass to front of room where recitation occurred). This same call bell had called classes for fourteen years before this. Exact assignments were given in all subjects, an average of twenty-five classes were called (to recite to the teacher) and by much hurrying, school was dismissed at four o'clock.... We did art work once a week for enjoyment and training....
>
> Now the little bell is no longer used. The children come in large groups and sit with their teacher in a large circle at the front of the room. Here they read and talk as the need may be. Much of the studying is done here. Quick pupils assist slower ones near them. This eliminates walking around. When the group is finished another group comes. Arithmetic is privately worked out at their seats with some drill and blackboard work. Each one working according to his own ability and speed.
>
> Instead of learning a lot of rules in grammar that many of them never understand and others soon forget, we study birds and write stories about them. We publish a bi-monthly paper. In this the children volunteer original poems, stories, and articles....
>
> We still follow the textbook in Geography although we enrich it with units on travel, transportation, special studies of products and places. Last year we did a good unit on Michigan.
>
> I have learned to think of the needs of the pupils.[1]

At just about the same time Helmick wrote her superintendent, Time magazine carried on its cover the portrait of Frederick L. Redefer, Executive Secretary of the Progressive Education Association (PEA). Pronouncing that progressive education had "strongholds in the suburbs of greater New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles," the movement was now "predominately a public school affair" even "transforming" major school systems such as Denver, San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York City, and Detroit.[2]

While Time made no mention of rural classrooms, Leona Helmick's report suggests that progressive theory, as she understood it, penetrated at least one Hillsdale County classroom. To what extent these ideas turned up in other rural classrooms in the two decades between the world wars is one of a number of questions that this chapter will try to answer.

Hillsdale was one of seven rural Michigan counties that participated in a three year project aimed at improving rural life through the schools. Between 1936-1939, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation provided funds to "give teachers and administrators a clearer understanding of the philosophy, psychology, and procedures involved in the newer concepts of education." Through college extension courses, weekend gatherings at the Foundation's camps, and special summer college courses teachers were expected to carry back to their one-room schoolhouses new skills and knowledge to use as means for improving rural education.[3]

In these seven counties there were over 1300 teachers working in one-room schoolhouses. Their average level of schooling was two years beyond the high school diploma. In a remarkable document 193* of these teachers who attended Kellogg Foundation-sponsored courses, workshops, or summer sessions wrote to Henry J. Otto, consultant to the Foundation, describing "the changes in classroom teaching ... the administrative problems which had arisen in connection with these changes, and the procedures which were used to meet these problems."[4]

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*Because three of the teachers were listed as anonymous, I have used 190 reports in all of the analyses.

The accounts ranged from sheer ecstasy over rejuvenated teaching to an obvious, and almost embarassing, absence of any change whatsoever. In order to assemble a coherent portrait of these rural teachers' class activities, I grouped the reported practices into categories extracted from progressive education literature on appropriate classroom techniques and constructed the following table.

Table 2. REPORTS FROM 190 ONE-ROOM SCHOOL TEACHERS IN MICHIGAN WHO PARTICIPATED IN KELLOGG-FUNDED ACTIVITIES

Category	Number of Teachers	Percentage
Physical Changes in Room		
a. Remove/modify student desks	32	17%
b. Make room home-like,(e.g. curtains, sofa, tables,etc.)	18	9
c. Create centers for students to read, work,etc.	32	17
d. Did at least two of above	19	10
Grouping Changes Teachers report combining classes, using small groups determined by ability, individualizing instruction, etc.	40	21
Schedule Changes Teachers report any change in daily or weekly schedule aimed at introducing a new practice, different subject, or modified grouping.	37	19
Increased Pupil Participation Teachers report change in governance of class with students leading discussion, running clubs,electing officers.	43	23
Provisioning Teachers report seeking out books, supplies, equipment to satisfy changes made in instruction, curriculum, and other parts of the program.	43	23
Activity Method Teachers report using method, describing projects, and integration of two or more subjects.	80	42

Extracurricular Activities Teachers report initiating clubs (hot lunch, Mothers' Club, 4-H,etc.).	53	28
Changing Report Cards Teachers report using a card that focuses upon child's emotional development and basic subjects; does not use letters A-F.	25	13
Making Curriculum Relevant (excluding activity method) Teachers report use of field trips, current events, examples from daily life in instruction, etc.	77	40

Substantial numbers of teachers reported the use of activity methods, including the use of projects to correlate different subjects and efforts to tie curriculum more closely to the lives of children. Fewer teachers reported other changes in how they grouped children, modified the daily schedule, altered report cards, increased pupil participation, and rearranged class space—a pattern resembling teacher selection of classroom practices elsewhere.

Since these figures summarize what individual teachers reported, no sense of how many teachers employed one or more of these practices is conveyed. The table below suggests the breadth of teachers' activities.

Table 3. SUMMARY OF TEACHER ACTIVITIES

Number Of Categories Reported	Number Of Teachers	Percentage
0	11	6.0
1	58	30.0
2	36	19.0
3	34	18.0
4	27	14.0
5	9	5.0
6	9	5.0
7	3	1.5
8	2	1.0
9	1	.5
10	0	0.0
11	0	0.0
	190	100.0

No criteria yet exist for determining how many activities and which ones define a teacher as progressive. Aware of all the problems inherent in developing such criteria, I constructed two in order to analyze the data: the number of progressive techniques teachers reported they used and any rearrangement of classroom space. Notions of progressive practice generally included numerous teacher behaviors (grouping practices, student activities, pupil participation, arrangement of space,etc.) Also the tight linkage between use of classroom space and furniture was a commonly-expressed and sought after fundamental in building a student-centered classroom.

Almost half of these Michigan one-room teachers reported using only two techniques; one-quarter used four or more practices. Depending upon how much weight an observer gives to rearrangment of space as a sign of progressive approaches, particularly in these one-room schoolhouses where bolted-down desks were common, of the fifty teachers (25%) who used four or more new techniques, two out of three made some change in the room (e.g. created space for learning centers; unbolted desks and put them of skids; placed curtains on windows, installed tables,sofa,etc.). Of the twenty-four teachers who reported four or more new practices, 87% had made some physical change in the room.

Such data have obvious limits. The teachers are an atypical sample, only 15% of total staff in seven counties, and these were either recruited to attend or sought out Foundation-supported courses. Moreover, self-reports are selective, lack independent verification, and often suggest efforts to please donors or supervisors rather than offer a realistic assessment of practice. A number of researchers have underscored the irresistible inflation of teacher estimates of their innovativeness. Despite these limits, there are some decided strengths to the data. They yield a glimpse of how progressive concepts get selected and put into classroom practice.

Through such varied filters as professors of education, foundation reformers, books, other teachers—classroom practice changed unevenly among teachers. Second, differing views among teachers regarding progressivism appear clearly.[5]

Alice Dean in Calhoun County, for example, let students work individually one period a day on arithmetic problems, helping one another when necessary. In the last two years, she said, this was "the biggest change in teaching that I have undertaken." Or Leslie Engle, another Calhoun County teacher, reported her new system of recording each student's personal, family, and school information as the sole innovation. Other teachers instituting such changes as a science center, adding tables to a a room, setting up a hot-lunch program in the face of a hostile parent community or indifferent superintendent, considered such changes as personal triumphs and, in some instances, viewed themselves as progressive teachers.[6]

Finally, the data make unmistakably clear that some rural teachers who were isolated from one another and received little support from superiors,nonetheless introduced some new practices into their rooms. However, the majority found it difficult to install more than two progressive techniques over a three year period.

Was southwestern Michigan a microcosm of rural schools across the country? Yes and no. The "yes" half of the answer comes from abundant evidence that progressive methods appeared in individual rural schools, both newly-consolidated and one-room buildings across the country.
Highly publicized experimental rural schools garnered national limelight in professional journals throughout the 1920s and early 1930s: Marie Turner Harvey's work at the Porter School in Kirksville, Missouri; Ellsworth Collins efforts in developing the project method in McDonald County, Missouri; Fannie Dunn's work at the Quaker Grove School in Warren County,

New Jersey.[7]

There were many less publicized efforts to introduce progressive techniques into black and white rural schools. Some of these instances were collected in a survey conducted by the Progressive Education Association's Committee on Experimental Schools in 1937. The Committee sent letters to over 300 schools and districts in 43 states. Seventy-eight replied; 44 came from public schools. Of these, rural teachers, supervisors, and superintendents in Connecticut, New York, North Carolina, Arizona, and California reported curriculum revision, integration of various content areas into school-wide programs, activity programs, and other student-centered approaches.[8]

Even less well known are the decisions individual teachers quietly made when they tried different methods at great expense to their salaries and their limited leisure time. Consider Mary Stapleton from Cuttingsville, Vermont.

> In the fall of 1932, I had an enrollment of about 20 pupils in all the grades. My superintendent told me about the Winnetka method (an approach that stresses individual instructional materials matched to differences in pupils) and suggested my reading some books....
>
> During the fall and winter of 1932-33, I did a great deal of research work, and in the spring I developed the technic [sic] in spelling.... I divided the words into units of 25 or 30 words each according to (students') grade placement and ability. This method tests the children on words we want them to know before they study them and allows them to concentrate on the words they miss in the test, rather than wasting time studying words they already know.
>
> This plan in spelling proved so successful that I decided to try to develop arithmetic the next fall.... I collected all of my textbooks together with my state courses of study and divided the year's work of each grade into 8 units, each with 3 or 4 sub-units. The next problem was the development of a set of diagnostic tests covering each detail....
>
> I found it helpful to exchange tests with other teachers. For a small sum I obtained some tests from Winnetka. I cut out examples and problems from old books, pasted them on cardboard and placed them in my files. The last and perhaps the most important job was to supply the children with self-instructive practice material.

> Printed drill pads in arithmetic and English have been found helpful....
>
> By the end of the year I had fewer failures than ever before. The children had begun to realize the objectives of this instruction and since there would be no repeating of grades, it was up to each to progress at his own rate of speed....
>
> The activity side of the instruction can be worked out effectively in the social studies program.... For example, an activity dealing with Indian life is an opportunity for children from the first to the eighth grades to make a contribution.... The question that confronted me as I worked out my units was: where can I get the materials to construct these activities? The question was answered by appealing to the children.... 9

The "no" half of the answer comes from numerous state and local studies of rural schooling since 1920. They provide a backdrop against which the rural Michigan data can be compared to determine what teaching conditions and classroom practices were elsewhere in the nation.

Rural schools were diverse. One-room schools in West Virginia hollows, rickety shacks on a scrub brush half-acre on a Mississippi plantation, and a newly-plastered room in a recently-built Iowa consolidated school merely skim the varied surface of rural schools. In 1920, almost half of all children enrolled in schools attended rural schools, that is, ones located in the "open country," and villages but not places over 2500 people. For the most part, rural will refer to schools with one or two teachers, village schools and ones consolidated through the closing of nearby one-room buildings.[10]

Few writers at this time sang the praises of the rural school. Progressive rhetoric and wisdom located the one-room school somewhere between the flintlock rifle and the wooden plow. "Devoted reformers, philosophers, and educators," a U.S. Bureau of Education specialist in rural education wrote, "have been traveling the length and breadth of the land preaching the inefficiency of the little old red schoolhouse."[11]

Preaching and consolidation cut into the numbers of such schools. From an estimated 195,000 one-teacher schools in 1917, the number fell to 153,000 enrolling 4,000,000 children a decade later. Still, some states contained many one-teacher schools. In South Dakota, for example, four out of five teachers taught in one-room schools. Half of the teachers in North Dakota did and over 40% of the teachers in Iowa, Montana, Nebraska, and Vermont worked in these schools.[12]

More often than not these buildings were old, furnished with antique equipment, and isolated. Teachers had little education beyond high school. They were young (median age 21-23), had little experience, and were mostly female. Turnover was high. Wages were low. From $300 to $800 a year(1920) for one-teacher schools, depending on the state, wages ran $500 to $700 less for jobs in village and town schools. Class sizes ranged from 20 to 60 students with the major difficulty being many grades in one room, i.e. thirty pupils scattered across eight grades with the teacher required to instruct in all subject areas for each grade.[13]

What did teachers do all day in these isolated yet densely-packed rooms? In the mid-1920s, a Teachers College graduate student surveyed 550 one-room school teachers in twenty-four states. Verne McGuffey found teachers reporting that they advised the school board on classroom needs (78%), visited parents (78%), provided drinking water (74%), oversaw school toilets (83%), and regulated heat and ventilation (88%). Instructionally,

. 73% taught all subjects in eight grades
. 82% kept several groups busy while one recited
. 75% presented subject matter in short periods [14]
. 66% planned and executed work with little or no supervision

Look at teaching practices in eighteen Pennsylvania counties with mainly rural schools in 1920. Reports came from 62% of the teachers in one-room schools. Median age of teachers (of whom 76% were female) was twenty-three. Most began teaching at nineteen. Almost four out of five teachers lacked a high school diploma or any formal teacher training. Class size averaged 26 in the eighteen counties with about one-quarter of the teachers reporting enrollments over 35 students. Remember that each class contained students spread over eight grades.[15]

When teachers say how many recitations they had, that is, how many times a day they questioned students in each grade within the class, figures stagger teachers today. One out of four teachers said they had conducted 30 or more recitations a day. The median was 26. Since the school day averaged five and a half hours (330 minutes), apart from recess and lunch, teachers reporting 30 or more recitations met daily for at least ten minutes with one or more students, dismissed them, met with another group,etc. Even the State Department of Education's formal course of study recommeded 23 daily recitations. All of this suggests the rugged, if not intense, schedule a teacher in a one-room school followed, according to both expectations and self-reports.[16]

Shortly after the Pennsylvania study, Orville Brim, professor at Ohio State University, led a survey team that evaluated Texas rural schools in 1922. Brim examined the published curriculum, surveyed county superintendents and teachers on how the curriculum was used, and, in a step unusual among researchers then and now, trained a set of observers to describe classrooms in 230 rural schools. These one-teacher schools, as elsewhere in the country, contained up to eight grades. Texas teachers, like their counterparts in other states had limited education, received low wages, and faced similar-sized classes. In these one and two-teacher schools the short class period of two to ten minutes, 24 times a day was described.[17]

What did teachers do in these brief episodes, called recitations? Brim and his colleagues summarized teacher practices:

.Drill	34%
.Formal textbook recitation	27%
.Meaning of text sought	27%
.Discussion of vital questions	4%
.Enjoyment	5%
.Construction work	4%

The textbook was the primary source of the lesson (88%) with little use of current events and children's experience (8%), according to Brim's team. The investigators found that virtually no special work or projects were given to students (found in 3% of classes).[18]

Brim's final summary of what he and his team saw in recitations follows:

> In practically all the work observed, the teacher is concerned in drilling the children upon some facts they are supposed to know or in asking questions that call for textbook answers. Occasions for thinking are few. Little, almost no, attempt is made to enrich a child's life with new interests.... Work does not grip the pupils. They add little to the facts of the lesson.... The teacher then arbitrarily assigns the next lesson in the text without any effort to develop interest or insight. The class is returned to its seat to memorize the text for the next recitation. Here they work blindly or half-heartedly or idly sit, with occasional admonitions from the teacher to study their lessons.

This, Brim concludes, is the picture in "70 to 85 percent of the schools" in all parts of the state.[19]

In other states throughout the 1920s and 1930s the rigors of teaching all subjects to a few students scattered over the grades produced in one-teacher schools the staccato series of brief recitations bracketed by opening exercises, lunch and recess. In North Dakota, to cite an instance, actual daily programs from one-room schools were collected in 1928 for a Masters' thesis. For a school with 24 pupils in School Number Three, Norway District, Traill County, the teacher held 22 recitations, averaging about fifteen minutes each between 9:15 in the morning and 4:00 in the afternoon with two recesses and an hour for lunch. In the same county, School Number Three in the Belmont District had 13 students. Twenty-one recitations, also averaging about the same time, within the same length school day, were held. For a Cass County school where the new Rural Course of Study was being implemented the teacher's daily program called for 22 recitations, about fifteen minutes each, for 19 students although in this case the teacher had grouped students by primary, intermediate, and grammar levels rather than by grades.[20]

One researcher summarized eleven studies identifying instructional problems of over 3200 rural teachers in over twenty states. All of the studies were based upon teacher reports of their problems. The similarity in problems disclosed by these investigations is striking. The researcher distilled into a list the diverse problems described by teachers. Heading that list was the category of inadequate time. Teachers complained that they lacked time to:

—prepare plans for every subject for all grades,

—help individual students,

—allow for pupil activities.

"There is general agreement in these studies," she concluded, "that the most frequent and most difficult problems of rural teachers are due to the one-room ungraded type of organization...."[21]

Yet ingenuity and persistence in the face of these obstacles turned up, suggesting that teachers, like most other people, did the best they could with what they had. On the everpresent problem of insufficient materials for seatwork, for example, Stella Lucien of Lewistown, Montana described what she did.

> I obtain one copy of Laidlaw's Silent Reading Seat Work for each grade. Many of these lessons direct the child to make some article, such as a bird house, a bubble pipe,etc. I cut out such lessons and paste them on cardboard. We then have seat work which may be used over and over without additional cost. We keep them in boxes and use them year after year.

Teacher Ruth Cederburg of Firth, Idaho wrote how she got primary students to be neat.

> I tacked a strong string across the front of the room; on this I fastened a balloon in front of each row of desks. Each evening before dismissal, aisles and desks were examined. If every child in a row had tidy desks and clean aisles the balloon in front of that row remained up. But if a single child had an untidy aisle or desk the balloon was taken down and remained down the following day. It was not long before every balloon remained up. 23

None of these studies mention specifically Black rural schools. Plagued by the same working conditions described before, untrained, poorly-paid teachers with little formal education, teaching with few books and materials, faced the same structural problems that affected how they taught: pupils of different ages spread over eight grades, mandates from school board and superintendent to cover all subjects, and insufficient time to do everything.

Fisk University sociologist Charles Johnson directed the 1924 survey of Louisiana Black schools. His team found the same dreary catalogue of problems in their visits to 132 one- and two-teacher schools familiar to informed observers of rural schools in other states. A typical situation in these schools, representing 65% of all Black schools in the state, according to Johnson, was captured in a description of the Shelton School in a Delta parish in eastern Louisiana.

Approaching the church in which the school was housed, the field workers saw two small privies surrounded by thick Delta mud next to the front entrance. Inside the school sixty students spanning seven grades sat next to one another on long wooden benches, fidgeting while they listened to an overweight teacher talk. Because of the chill in the morning air, there was much shifting around to allow students to get closer to warm areas near the small stove in the back of the room. No ventilation in the room stirred the air except for the draughts that came through the many cracks in the floor and walls. Smudged darkly with smoke, the walls held kerosene lamps. One of the lamps hung from an equally dark ceiling. Just above the pulpit, at the rear of the room, a washstand stood with a cracked pitcher. The room was crowded.

The visitors watched the teacher pass out two half-sheets of paper to each pupil saying, "It's got to do you all day, so be careful with it." She looked at one observer and said: " We don't have no pencils; we don't have no books; we don't have anything." She looked back at the class and began giving out assignments in history and spelling, grade by grade, to the restless but quiet students.

> Take pages 45 to 50, seventh grade. Sixth grade take pages 20 to 30. Now read this and tell me what you read when I come back....
>
> All right, fourth and fifth grade, spelling. The first word is correspond. It means to write people. Second, instrument--something you use. Do you know any instrument you'd like to play? Come on, talk up. Do you have a speller, Fred. No? Well, just sit and listen. You'll just have to do without. Third, examination, sometimes we have yes and no--that's examination. Fourth, tennis--that's a game. Fifth, ninety, counting from one to ninety. All right, that's your spelling. Use them in sentences.

The teacher, walking around the room with a switch in her hand, then moved to reading for the lower grades. She read a single line from a book and the children repeated the line. She completed the lesson in that manner.[24]

Johnson also offered a portrait of a one-teacher school that, in his judgment, "stands in sharp contrast to the mass of one-teacher schools in the state." The Brooks School, a tiny white-washed frame building on a cleared plot of ground in East Feliciana Parish, received a team visitor the week before Christmas. On a table in the room was a class-built scene of the manger and the Christ child. The work table in the rear and the book shelves along the side of the room were covered in bright red and yellow oil cloth while the shelves in the rear of the room contained water glasses individually labeled for the students. The room was spotless.

As one group of children sat in their seats making gifts for a party, another group stood at the work table making "favors" with scissors, paper, and paste. The teacher moved from group to group quietly listening and giving advice when asked.

The class had just completed a unit on cotton. The teacher who had worked on a farm had shown pictures of the various stages of cotton production and actual plants. The class had gone through the process from seed to clothes with all the grades, using arithmetic and reading where appropriate. In the first grade she used flash cards marked COTTON and related words. In second and third grades, pupils made sentences about the plant, and in sixth and seventh grades they wrote short stories. On many occasions, the visitor was told, all of the children participated in discussion. Even with all of the grades and subjects to cover, the teacher moved the class through the subjects in an orderly manner, the team worker reported.[25]

The Brooks School was an exception. Of one hundred teachers, seventy-five had never done a unit that included a project or similar activity. The twenty-five teachers who reported that they had done projects listed: Indian Life, Gardening, Products of Louisiana, Health, Sewing, Cooking, and Life at Home. Student participation in school governance was non-existent: of 132 one-room schools, 115 teachers either said they had no student government at all or did not respond.[26]

This coarse-grained picture of Black and white rural schools began with Hillsdale County teacher Leona Helmick and her colleagues in southwestern Michigan who had received some formal exposure to progressive methods of teaching. I had asked whether these one-teacher schools were a microcosm of the rest of the country. Criss-crossing the country, a number of state and national studies suggested yes and no answers. There were numerous instances of progressive practices but they seemed to be tiny coral reefs in a vast ocean of teacher-centered patterns of instruction.

The final data that I offer are 103 classroom descriptions (excluding the 190 rural Michigan teachers) I collected from thirty-two states in every region of the country. Does this data converge with or contradict the diverse studies already reviewed?

While the 103 photos and written accounts differ from the sources

Figure 7. PATTERNS OF INSTRUCTION IN RURAL SCHOOLS ELEMENTARY CLASSROOMS, 1920-1940

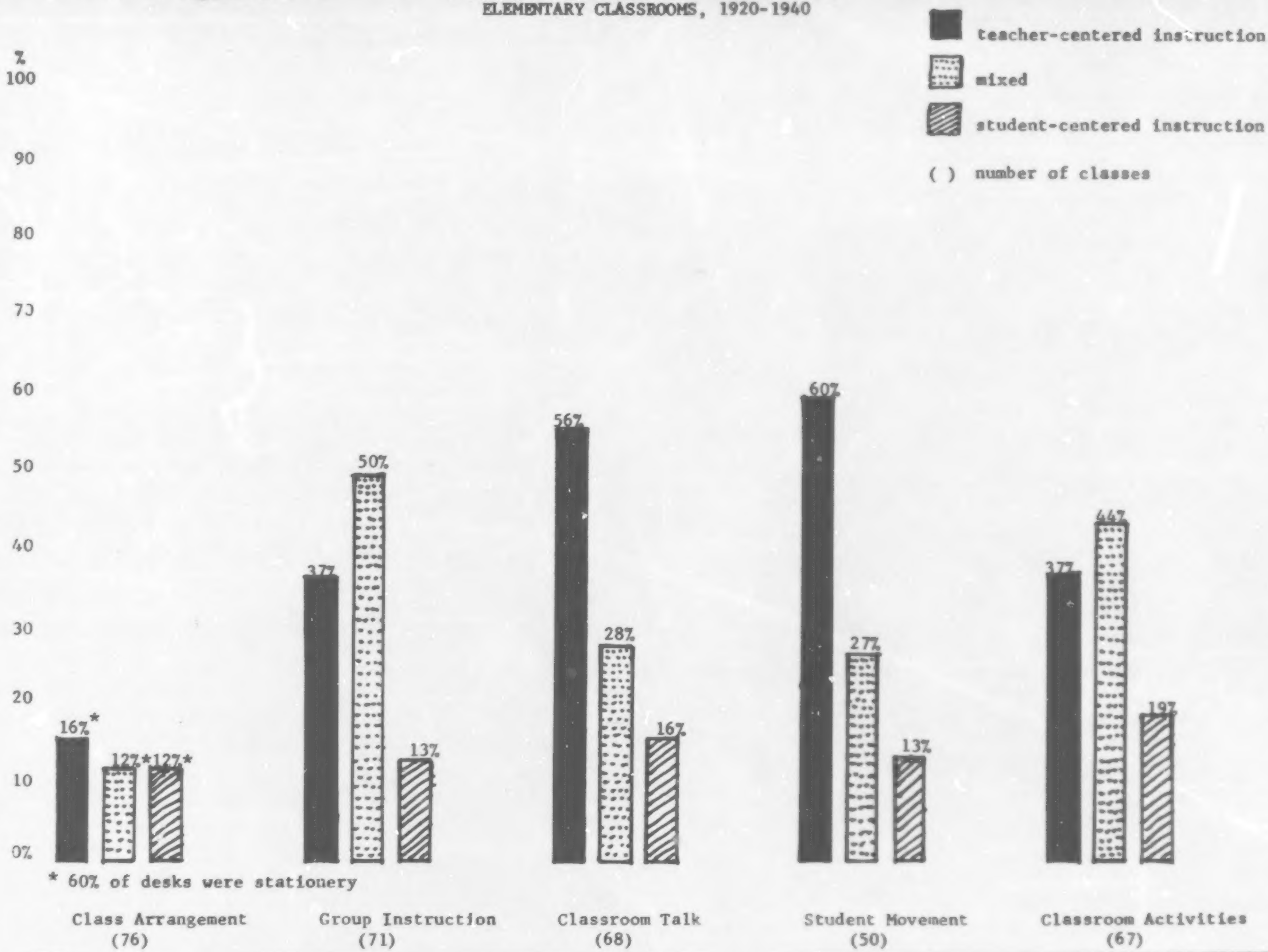
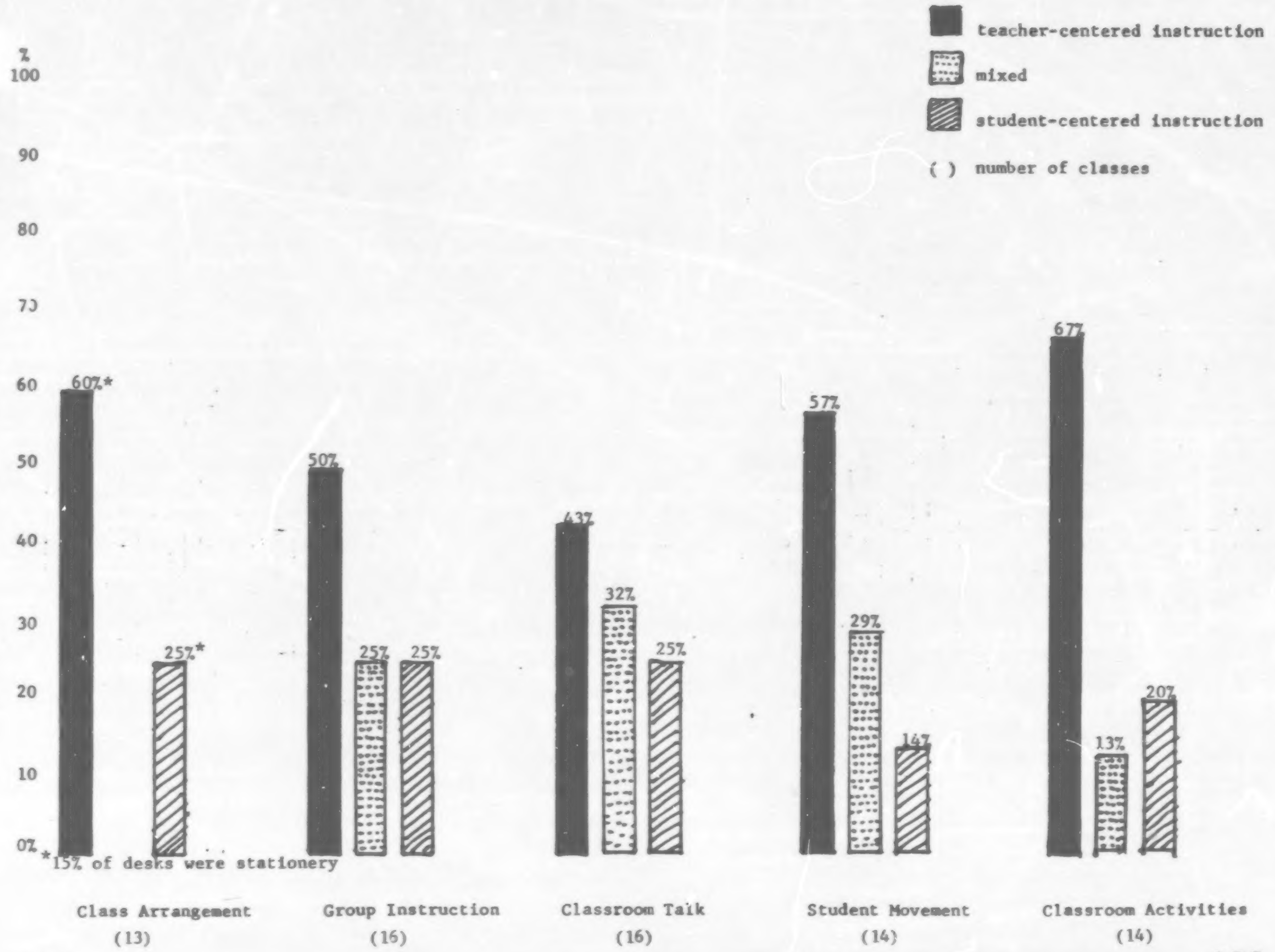
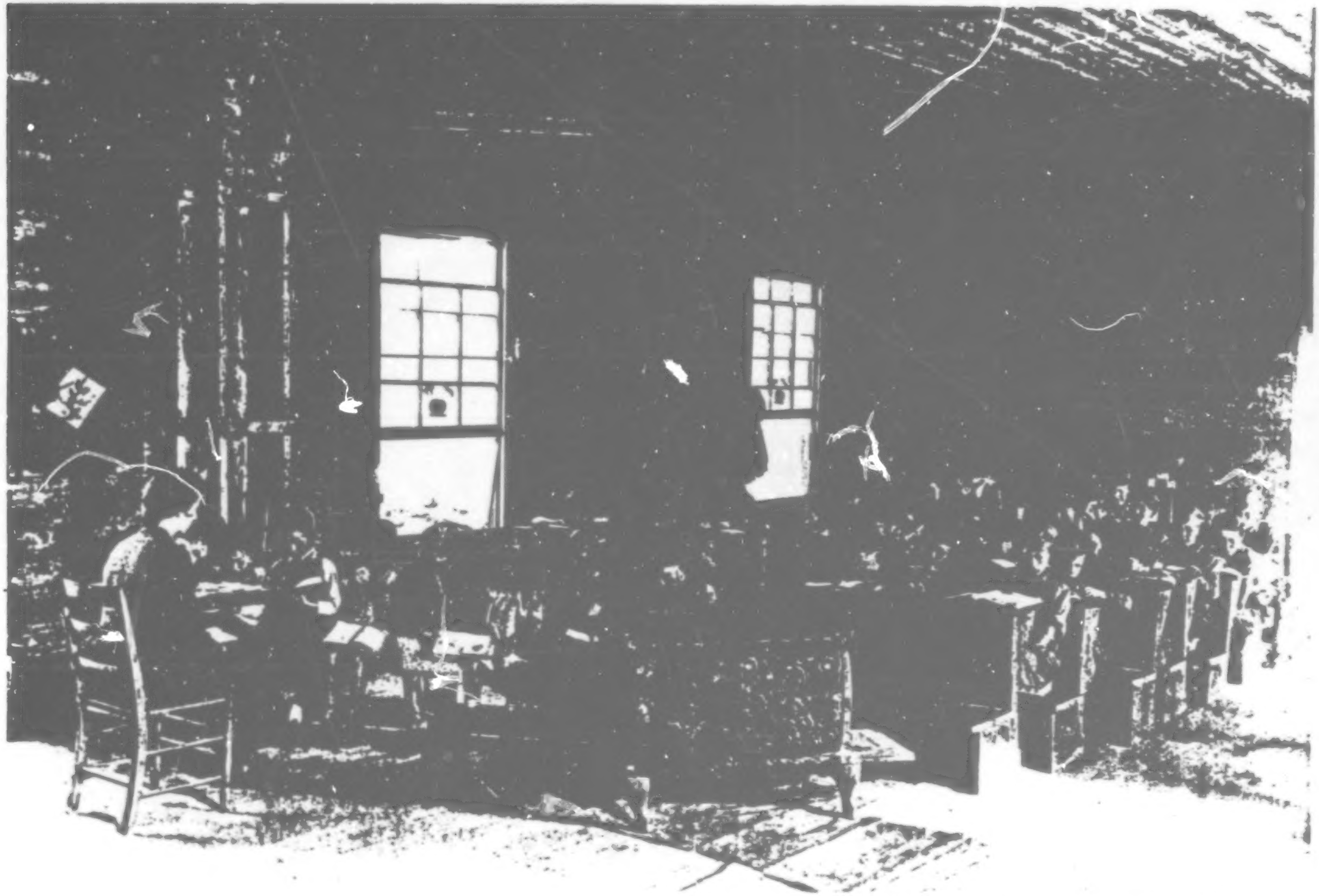


Figure 8. PATTERNS OF INSTRUCTION IN RURAL SCHOOLS
HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOMS, 1920-1940

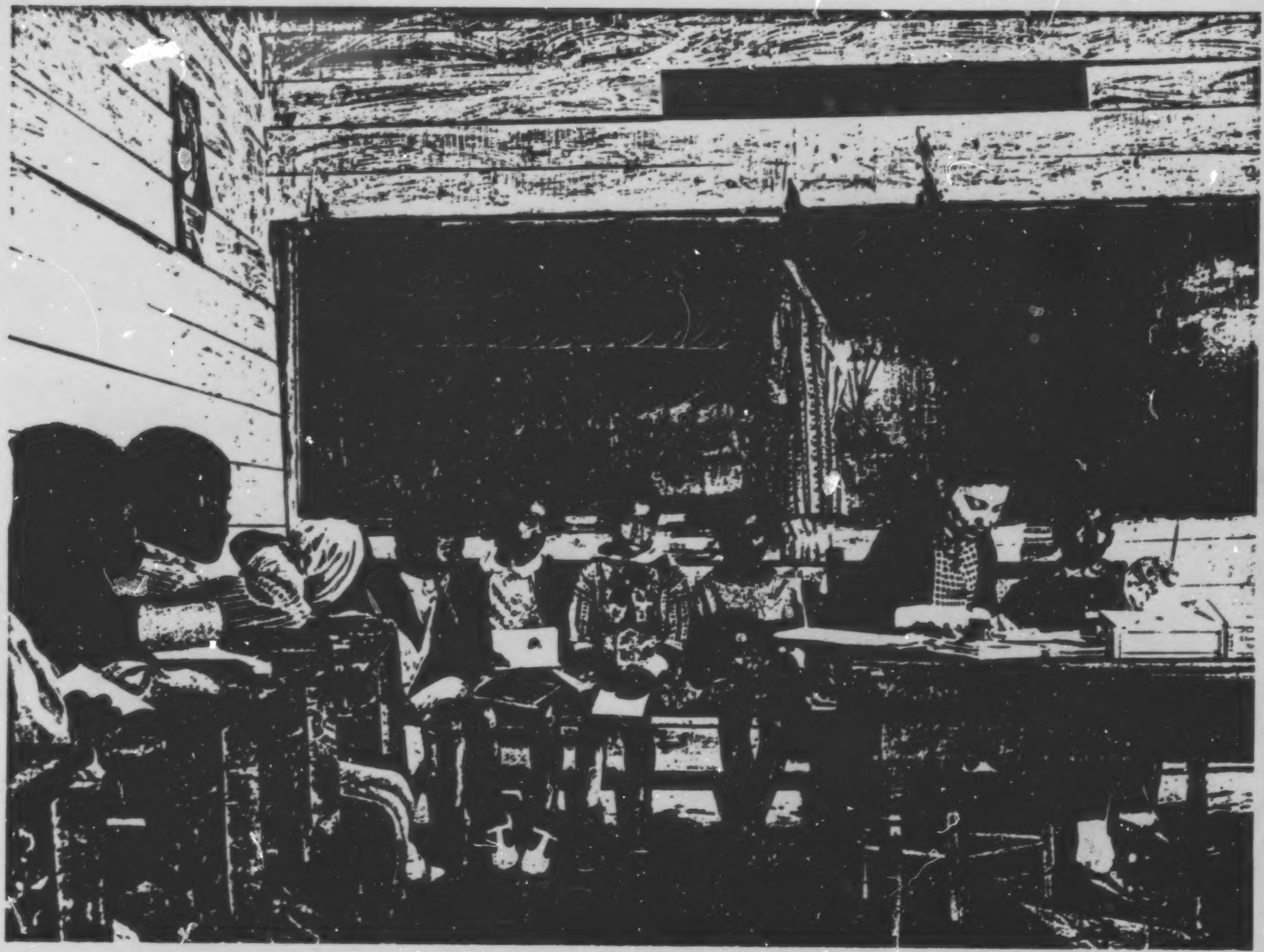




Rural One-Room School, Crossville, Tennessee, c. 1935 (Library of Congress)

Rural One- Room School, Breathitt County, Kentucky, Activity Program, 1940 (Library of Congress

San Augustine, Texas Elementary School, 1943 (Library of Congress)



Rural One-Room School, White Plains, Georgia, 1941 (Library of Congress) used in the studies of rural schools described above they, nonetheless, display a rough symmetry with that data. Teacher-centered patterns of instruction register strongly; student-centered practices scale no higher than 40% with most falling 25% or less. Very few of these 103 teachers tried projects or centers; they show up in less than 10% of the elementary school classrooms. Progressive practices, as defined in these categories, existed in rural classrooms nationally but were probably an minority.

One curious note is the high percentage in group instruction and class activities in the mixed pattern of teaching. Half of the teachers used a blend of large and small group instruction accompanied by work with individual students; almost half of the classrooms had activities where a mix of student-centered and teacher-centered approaches occurred. Compared to the other settings, these percentages are high and may stem from factors within the rural classroom unlike any faced by teachers in city schools. With students spread among several grades in one room, for example, teachers would generally call upon a few students to recite near the teachers' desk, leaving the rest of the class to work on different assigned tasks until they were called to the recitation bench. Students working in groups and helping one another in one-room schools, then, may explain why practices in ungraded rural schools varied from those in graded urban schools.

The dominant patterns of instruction were teacher-centered and mixed--similar to, but not identical with, configurations that surfaced in the three cities.

So far I have tried to reconstruct teaching practices at the turn of the century and between World War I and II in three cities and rural schools. Now, I turn to teaching practices that were prevalent nationally in the interwar period. A look at schools beyond the three cities I have described would set the stage for a summary of the similarities and differences that I found in both rural and urban schools played against a national backdrop. That summary would then be contrasted with teaching practices in 1900 to determine what changes,if any,had occurred in classrooms by World War II.

In examining evidence of what teachers did in their classrooms, I will concentrate on those teaching activities that were clearly targets for change: formal recitation, whole group instruction, the teaching of separate subjects, and lack of student activity or movement in the class. At this point, summarizing data drawn from classroom descriptions on group instruction, classroom activities, and student movement in the four settings is appropriate.

Recall that the teacher-centered pattern for group instruction included teaching the entire class as a unit while within a student-centered pattern it referred to dividing the class into small groups and individual work. The mixed pattern described teachers who used varied grouping techniques ranging from teaching the whole class to independent work. Elementary classrooms in Denver and New York City showed the least amount of whole group teaching and the highest amounts of work in small groups.In these city high schools the favored grouping was the entire class although percentages for rural classrooms were lower.Similarly,urban high school teachers infrequently divided their classes into groups with rural teachers showing a slightly higher percentage than their urban cousins in using small groups for instruction although the number of teachers is small.

What emerges starkly in these graphs are divergent patterns in grouping between elementary and high school classrooms: the incidence of

Figure 9. INSTRUCTIONAL GROUPING PATTERNS IN FOUR SITES, 1920-1940

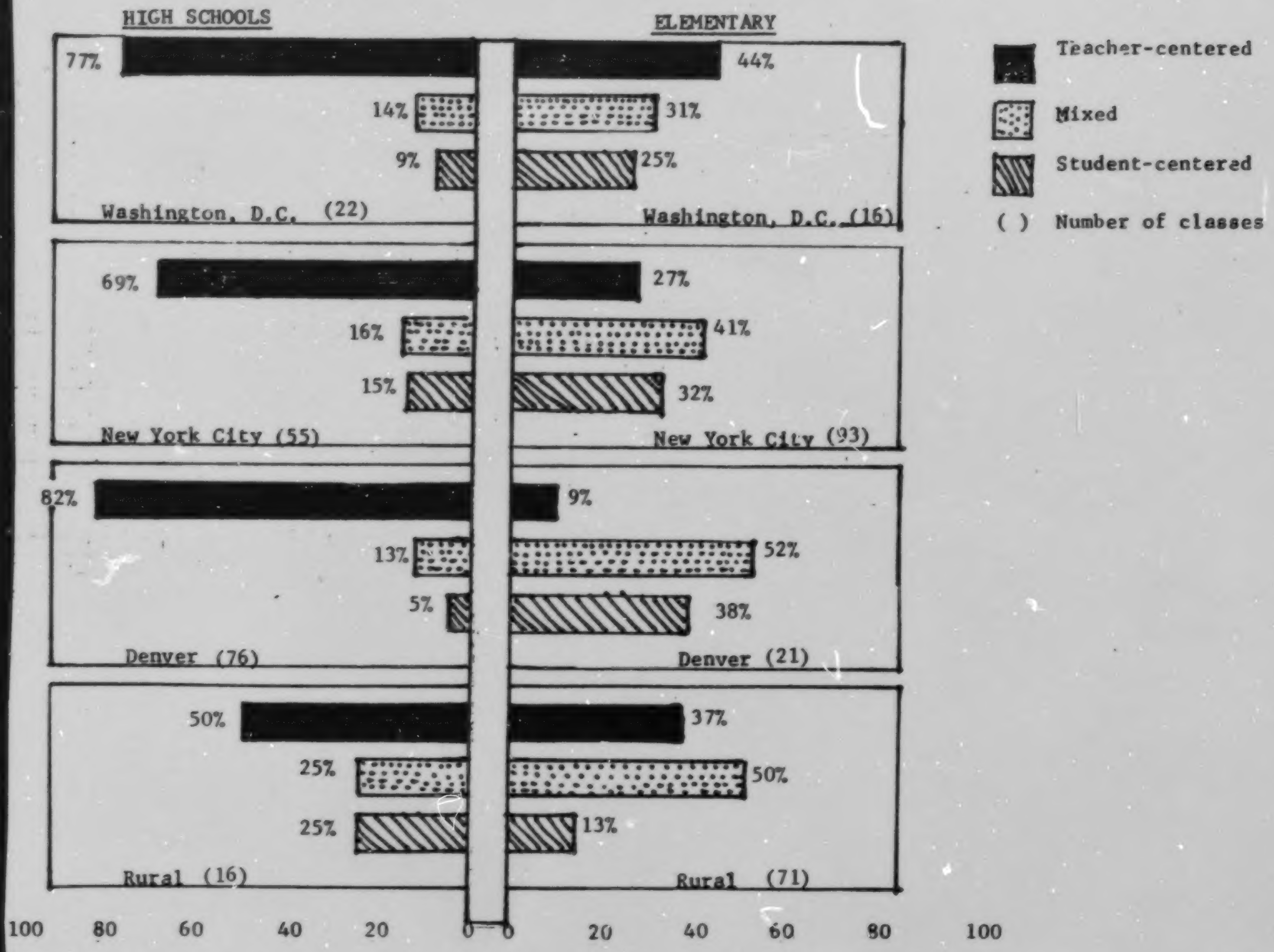
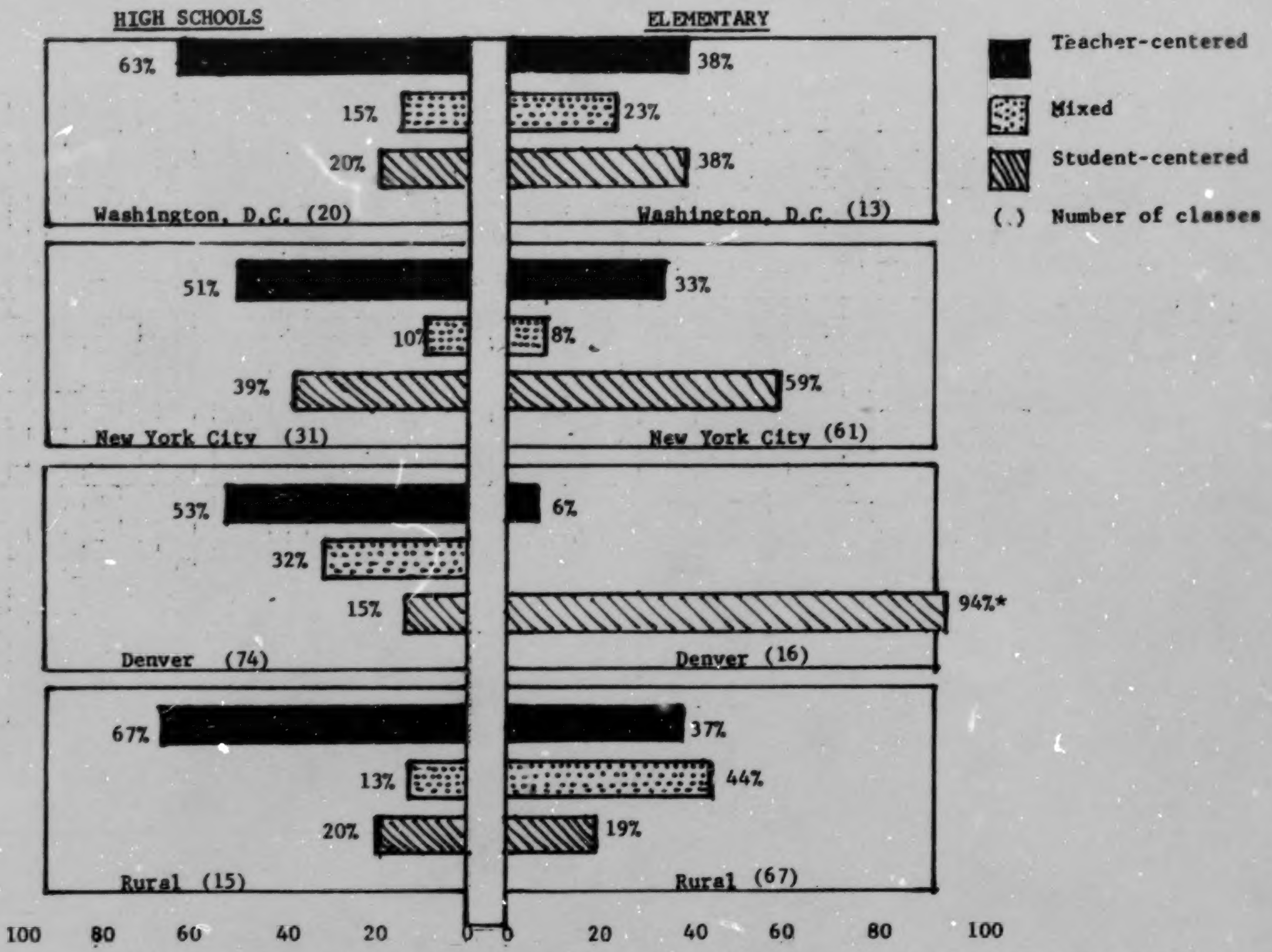


Figure 10. CLASS ACTIVITY PATTERNS IN FOUR SITES, 1920-1940



*Analysis of sources that produced this percentage showed that the activities came from photographs from local papers that school officials had provided to reporters or newspaper articles that described activities, mostly of the project variety. This percentage, then, probably overstates the frequency of student-centered activities.

Figure 11. STUDENT MOVEMENT PATTERNS IN FOUR SITES, 1920-1940

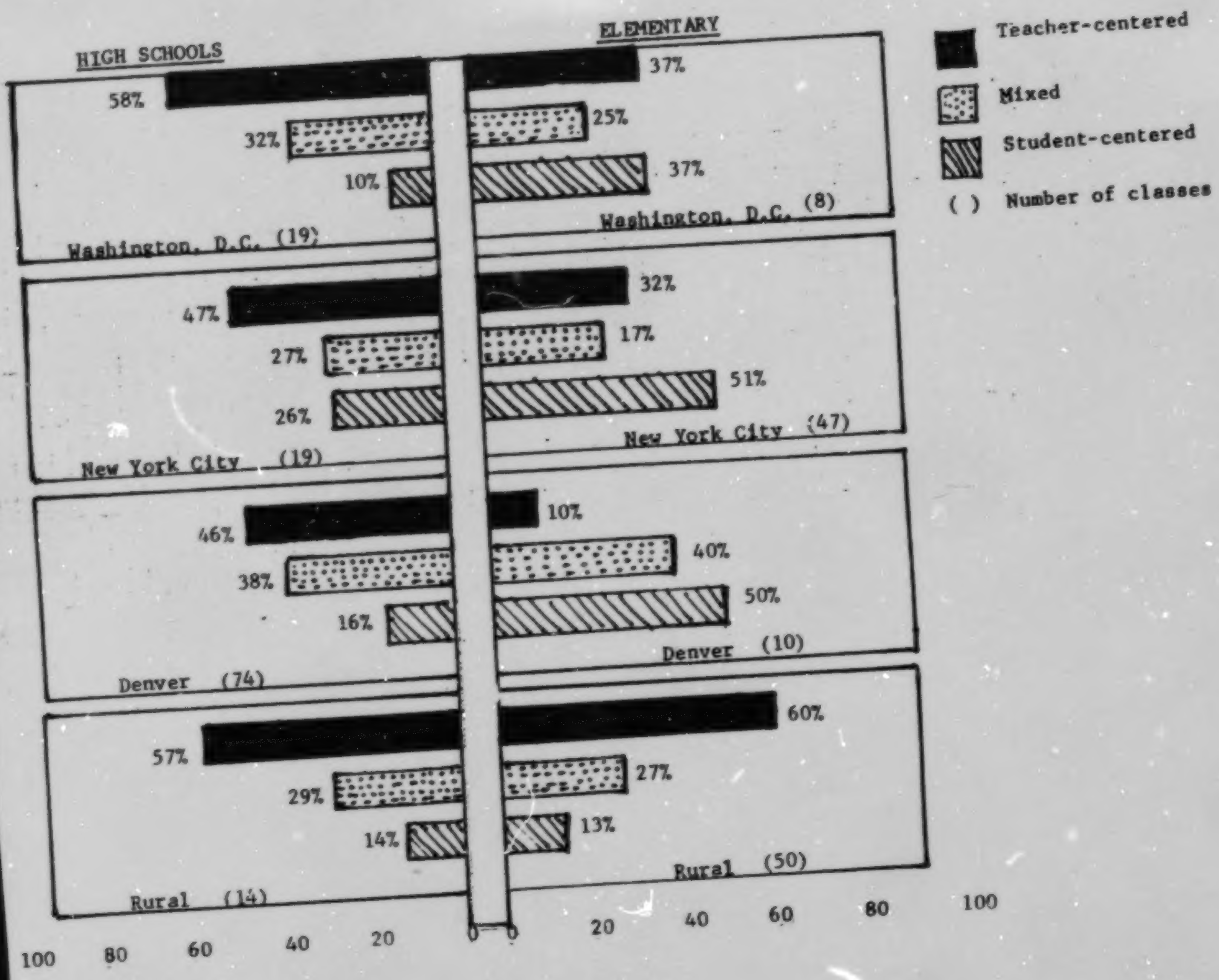
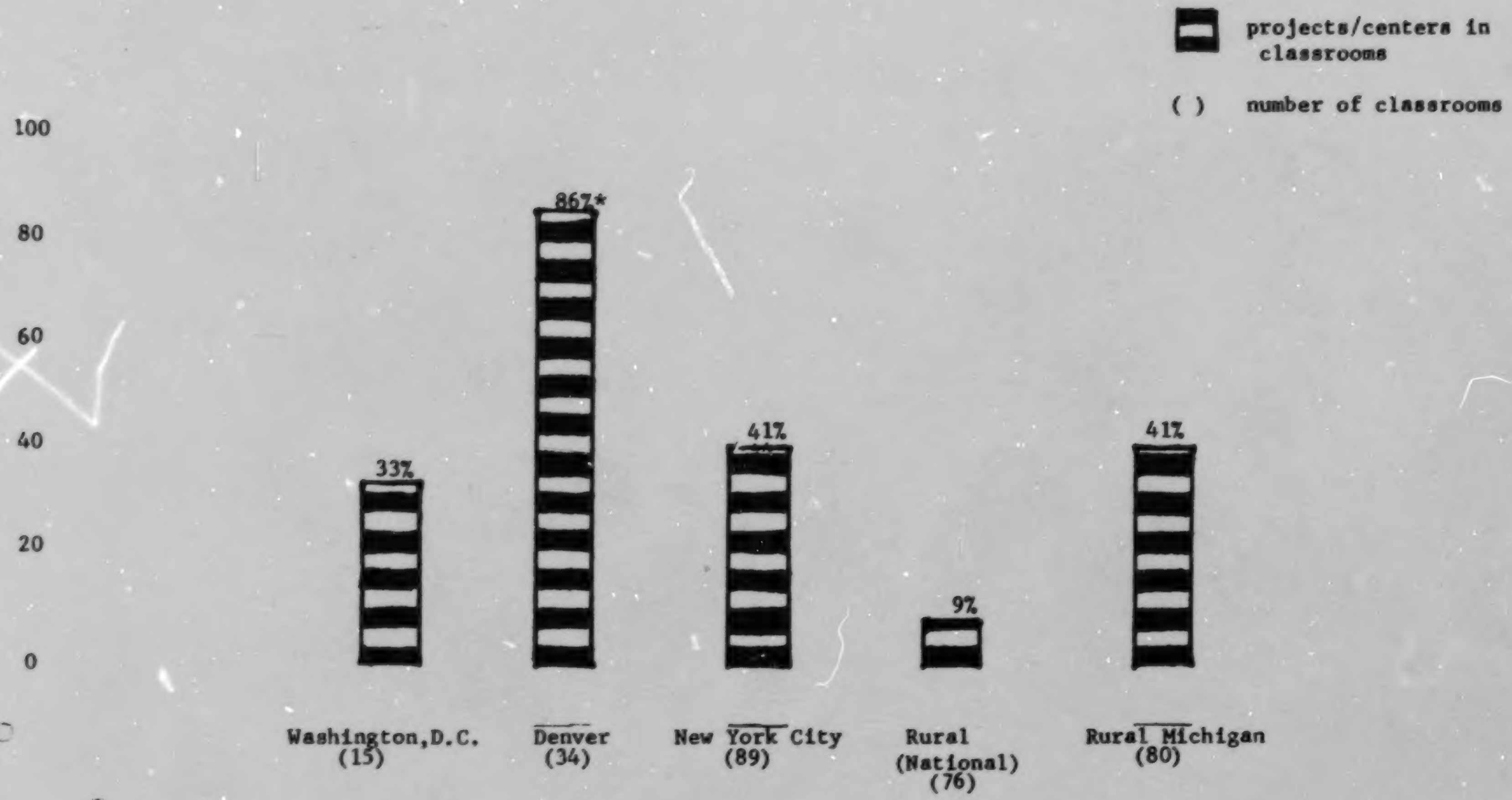


Figure 12. USE OF PROJECTS/CENTERS IN ELEMENTARY CLASSROOMS, 1920-1940



* Analysis of sources that produced this percentage revealed that project/center activities came from either photographs from local newspapers that school officials had provided (or suggested to reporters) or newspaper articles specifically on such projects, e.g. Indians, Mexico, colonial America, building a boat,etc. This percentage then, probably overstates frequency of projects.

whole group instruction occurred far more in high school than in elementary classes; teaching in small groups took place substantially more often, except in rural schools, in the lower grades than in the high school.

Under "Class Activities" where recitation, discussion, project work, seatwork, and the usual instructional tasks occurred, similar patterns surface. More teacher-centered class activities and fewer student-centered ones turned up in high school than elementary rooms. Otherwise, no clear pattern between and among city and rural classrooms emerge.

For "Student Movement", the same configurations between elementary and high school teachers, except for rural classrooms, appear again. More students move about in lower than upper grades with Denver and New York classrooms showing slightly higher percentages in both teacher- and student-centered patterns. Finally, the percentage of elementary classrooms that had project work ran highest in Denver, New York City, and rural Michigan classrooms although Denver's figure is inflated due to the sources used.

These graphs describe frequencies in teaching behavior in almost 300 classrooms. They show general instructional patterns suggesting the extent that student-centered practices surfaced in how teachers organized their classes for instruction, the activities they structured, and the degree of student mobility they permitted. What about specific teaching tactics like the recitation, textbook, activity method, cooperative planning between teacher and student,etc? There is a small body of evidence describing what teachers did in their classrooms between the two wars that offer some answers to the question.

Take, for example, the recitation. Teacher asks questions; students recite answers from either a textbook, workbook, blackboard work, or previously memorized content. The familiar pattern of many teacher questions and short answers from students on specific subject matter has been lamented throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century by both journalists, professionals, and reformers. Romiett Stevens's transcription of lessons in 1908-1911 documented what others had observed. In the decades that followed the publication of her study--I suggest no cause-effect relationship--the formal recitation softened. The gradual penetration of the "socialized recitation," a technique that had students, instead of the teacher, cover the subject matter through student-led discussions, reports, staging of scenes from novels or plays, panels, and debates. This practice transformed the formal recitation. Verbal exchanges between teacher and students still pivoted on questions asked by the teacher but could slip easily into either a quasi-conversation or shift back toward the formal recitation where the teacher delivered a volley of rapid-fire questions to students who returned the volley with one word answers, followed, in turn by another burst of teacher questions. Students standing at their desks reciting, a familiar image in classrooms for decades had become, by the 19[illegible]0s, a quaint custom in urban classrooms. Replacing it was the also very familiar image of arm-waving pupils vying for the teacher's attention.

Pedagogical reformers, divided as they were among themselves on what classrooms should be like, probably saw the relaxation of formalism as a plus. But far more was sought in classroom change. The informal recitation was viewed as one of a number of competing activities chosen by teachers that involved students in the life of the classroom. They sought, among other things, small groups working on topics that joined different subjects, joint teacher-pupil planning, explicit links with life beyond the school, and active involvement of students in class tasks such as building replicas, painting murals, and dozens of other activities—all orchestrated by the teacher in a subtle, non-directive way. Studies of teaching practice between the two wars, however, suggest that Vivian

Thayer's The Passing of the Recitation(1928) was premature and could have been retitled "The Persistence of the Recitation."[27]

Some investigators in these years looked at teaching methods in classrooms, but of the few who did only a handful counted what they saw. Counting has no special virtue given the varied meanings observers attached to such words as "child-centered," "progressive," and "modern."
Hence, I have restricted myself to those studies that reported events that were less judgmental, less vulnerable to interpretation. In short, behaviors that could be seen and counted, reduced the risk of misjudging what had occurred in the classroom: groups of students working together; students answering teacher questions; movable or stationary student desks, students giving reports, leading discussions,etc. Even with these hedges, a risk of misinterpretation remains but it is somewhat reduced. In comparing the studies that I will describe here, a look at the graphs following p.152 shows similarities and differences between the classroom descriptions I collected and categorized under "Group Instruction," and "Classroom Activities."

In 1922, a statewide study of Texas schools brought Margaret Noonan, a New York University professor, to the state to direct that portion of the survey examining black and white city schools. An ardent
advocate of progressivism, Noonan stated clearly the standards by which she would judge instruction in Texas city schools: presence of group work, joint pupil-teacher planning, evidence of connections between classwork and life outside the school, and "the whole child must be kept in mind."[28]

Trained observers used a list to check off what they saw in teachers' rooms. Many statements were open to broad interpretation by the observer, e.g. "students show enjoyment and appreciation of activity." A few items on the checklist included specific items and behaviors.[29]

Table 4. SELECTED ITEMS REPORTED IN 1922 SURVEY OF NINE TEXAS CITIES, WHITE AND BLACK SCHOOLS

Category	White %	Black %
Furniture fastened to floor	70	77
Activity suggested by pupil or class	2	0
Pupils at work on same activity	56	42
Pupils at work on group activity	14	22
Pupils at work on individual activity	3	2
Current events discussed	22	15
Pupils moving freely	24	20
Number of classes observed	(176)	(40)

On a larger scale than Noonan, Teachers College professor, William Bagley, conducted a national study on teaching methods in 1930 that summarized results from state, city, and rural surveys between 1900-1930. "One who studies such reports over a series of years," he said, "could scarcely escape the conclusion that the work of the typical American classroom, whether on the elementary or secondary level, has been and still is, characterized by a lifeless and perfunctory study and recitation of assigned textbook materials."[30]

To verify the accuracy of these survey conclusions, Bagley wrote to superintendents, principals, local and state supervisors of instruction across the country asking them to use an observation instrument he had developed to describe teaching methods. He received over 500 completed classroom forms from over thirty states unevenly distributed between rural (169) and urban (356), elementary (342) and secondary (183). Acknowledging that observers may have had varied perspectives in describing teachers, he cautioned readers that these observations "cannot be regarded as thoroughly typical of what is going on in classrooms...."[31]

Although some categories were collapsed to provide clarity, the main results of his survey follow:

Table 5. FREQUENCY IN TYPE OF RECITATIONS AND PROJECT METHODS REPORTED BY BAGLEY, 1929-1930, IN PERCENTAGES

Method	Rural Elem.	Urban Elem.	Rural High	City High
Textbook Recitation	16.6	10.4	28.8	22.5
Individual and Group Work:				
individual reports--	7.3	7.7	10.0	5.5
group or committee report--	5.0	5.2	1.1	3.1
individual and group projects--	9.0	12.2	5.5	6.0
TOTAL	21.3	25.1	16.6	14.6
Number of classrooms	(108)	(234)	(61)	(122)

How did Bagley explain the differences between those formal surveys that concluded textbook recitations dominated instruction and these results from professionals who sat in classrooms and found that student-centered practices had penetrated classes considerably both in city and countryside schools? Was it because school officials responding to a professor wanted "to make as good a showing as possible in the light of contemporary ideals," i.e. progressivism? Or was it because practitioners visiting classrooms for which they were responsible, exhibited a "natural tendency to interpret what they saw as conforming closely with generally accepted standards?" Noting both explanations, Bagley dismissed them and concluded that "contemporary educational theory seems to be affecting elementary-school practice in a fairly profound fashion, and it is apparently not without its influence upon the secondary school." Whether or not a range of 15%-25% of individual and group work observed in classrooms is considered "profound" influence, regularities similar to ones I found appear in Bagley's survey. Differences between elementary and high school are evident in levels of recitation and student-centered activities. Also the magnitude of individual and group work is comparable to percentages for student-centered instruction under the category "Class Activities."[32]

In 1940, L. W. Krause, a public school teacher, completed a study in ten Indiana cities of 217 fourth to sixth grade classrooms. Again, much of the instrument he used to assess progressive practice required a great deal of judgment by the observer, e.g. teacher conducted class on democratic principles, children showed signs of self-discipline, teacher encouraged clear thinking. Some items, though, did call for describing the presence or absence of actual activities, reducing somewhat, but not eliminating, the margin for interpretation by an observer.[33]

Those tallies follow:

Table 6. AVERAGE FREQUENCY OF SELECTED ITEMS REPORTED IN 217 INDIANA INTERMEDIATE CLASSROOMS, 1940[34]

Category	Percentage
Movable furniture	46
Several groups of pupils at work	2
Variety of materials present	16
Teacher has a unit of work in progress	1
Students helping to plan work	4

For high schools, a number of studies between 1924-1930 concentrated on what teachers did and said in their classrooms. Covering all of the academic subjects in large and small, urban and rural, schools these investigators sat in classrooms, recorded, and transcribed notes for almost 600 experienced teachers in midwestern and California high schools. The results are remarkably akin to the earlier work of Romiett Stevens (1912) in revealing the high level of teacher control over the amount and direction of classroom talk; the narrow margin of time available to students to respond; and how few other activities occurred in the typical forty-five minute period.

Between 1924-1926, university researchers visited 346 classrooms in the Minneapolis, Minnesota area and found that four activities (recitation, supervised study, assignments and tests) accounted for 90% of each class period. Recitation consumed an average of 62% of class time. Two Northwestern University professors went into 116 Chicago social studies classrooms in 1929 and concluded that "teaching is still largely 'question and answer' recitation." They found that 82% of the teachers asked questions, some as rapidly as 150 in a forty-five minute period. They were surprised at how few students raised questions (10%) during the recitation or offered any comment (8%). "The changes," they noted, "being advocated in our methods of teaching are not finding their way into the schools to any considerable extent." In the same year, A.S. Barr sat in 77 social studies classes of Wisconsin teachers, designated as "good" and "poor" by their principals and superintendents. Within a forty minute period, he found that the teachers asked 93 and 102 questions, respectively. Stenographic records verified that teachers monpolized air time during the class reaching almost 60% for the recitation portion of the class alone. He also found eight teachers who used the "problem-project organization or learning by doing." Finally, in 1930, a Stanford student observed forty-two English and social science teachers in five San Francisco area schools. Charles Bursch found that "class discussion" averaged 59% of each class period.[35]

Before more numbers blur the readers' vision let me underscore two points: first, evidence collected by very different methods from large and small, rural and urban, high schools, in different sections of the country from teachers of academic subjects shows notable convergence with the data I found in almost 175 urban and rural classrooms. Second, the pattern of using the entire class as the primary vehicle for instruction, the question-answer format, and general reliance upon the textbook that Stevens and others observed decades earlier seemed undisturbed in the years between the two wars in the nation's high school classrooms.

The core of progressive practices that entered some high school classes was pared down from the core of practices that spread among far more elementary teachers. Projects, joint student-teacher planning, small group work simply did not appear as often or as in many places as they did in the lower grades, at least from the reports of observers who sat in classrooms, from descriptions written by teachers and others, and from photographs.

Yet evidence drawn from principals' and superintendents' reports, shows far higher percentages of diffusion of certain progressive methods in high school classrooms. The congressionally-mandated three year Survey of Secondary Education, 1929-1932, for example, produced a massive body of information from 8600 secondary schools, about one out of every three such schools in the country at that time. On the one item of project methods, 27% of the schools said that they used this form of instruction although only 4% reported its use "with unusual success." Similarly, for the phrase "Individualized Instruction," 25% of the schools checked off the space indicating use. Here again, 4% of the schools said they used it "with unusual success." Part of the problem, of course, is what the words mean to the people reporting the practice. If a handful of social studies teachers out of a faculty of 100 in a school of 3500 students produced a few projects the semester previous to the survey, the principal would report the school as employing this approach. Equally as troublesome in reporting was the ambiguity, if not confusion, of terms like project method. Quite often this and other phrases were indistinguishable (e.g. Dalton method) from one another in school officials' minds. Furthermore, curriculum changes,i.e. revised courses of study, merging of subjects, changing labels and content of conventional subjects, did happen. These alterations often got entangled with descriptions of changes in teaching practice, impulses to be fashionable in joining current reforms, and positive acceptance of those changes by those who responded to the survey.[36]

J. Wayne Wrightstone, New York City school-system evaluator and later professor during the surge of interest in activity programs, made this point in a study he did for the General Education Board. He tried to separate what experimental practices high schools had undertaken in the 1930s. Leaning heavily upon the National Survey, cited above, the Eight Year Study sponsored by PEA, and a network of contacts he had cultivated with high school experiments across the nation, Wrightstone concluded that major strides had been taken in introducing new subjects and content into the high school curriculum, especially the correlation of school subjects. But, he noted, the specific center of gravity in classroom instruction remained pinned to the recitation, textbook, and instruction to the entire class.[37]

SUMMARY

What conclusions can I draw from a study of four different settings and an analysis of national studies of the years between the two World Wars about the extent of the spread of progressive teaching practices? Without comparing the results here with what I will describe in the final three chapters, a summing up at the half-way point is useful, if for no other reason than to establish the commonalities that emerged from the varied settings and types of data.

1. A core of progressive teaching practices penetrated a considerable number of elementary schools but in the districts I examined and the studies I reviewed the number of classrooms never reached anywhere near a majority in a school district. This core of practices—increased levels of student participation through small group work; project activities; more student expression; increased use of varied classroom groupings; increased joining of two or more subject areas; more contacts with community through field trips; and more freedom to move around a room—was unevenly implemented within and across classrooms for only a portion of the school day. I estimate that such teaching practices seldom appeared in more than one-fourth

of the classrooms in any district that systematically tried to install these varied elements. Elsewhere, little formal organizational energy was devoted to implementing these practices. The number of teachers adopting this core of practices probably hovered in the range of one out of five to ten elementary teachers. The percentage would run higher if certain practices were counted since teachers were quite selective in what they chose to incorporate into their classrooms.[38]

The progressive practices that turned up less frequently in elementary classrooms were ones that touched the center of the teacher's authority: student decision-making on what content to study, the allocation of time in the schedule; and movement in the classroom without requesting the teacher's permission.

2. In academic subjects at the high school level even fewer progressive practices modified teacher-centered instruction in the interwar period. In a few high school classrooms, scattered and isolated, except for Denver, an activity program, varied groupings, flexible space arrangments, and joint pupil-teacher planning did exist. Few progressive practices appeared in most high school classes. Course content, generally in English and social studies, changed. Some loosening of the formalism connected with the recitation occurred with more discussion, student reports, debates,etc. Traces of child-centered practice could be seen in increased student participation in classroom talk, occasional trips to places in the community, and subject matter that touched upon student concerns or life outside of the classroom. But the percentage of time allotted to subjects—except for those schools that tried out core curriculum or general education for a part of the school day—remained the same.Even with movable furniture,space often continued to be arranged with the teacher's desk at the front of the classroom facing rows of tablet-arm chairs or portable desk-chairs.

3. These reduced cores of practices in elementary and secondary classrooms became, in effect, hybrid versions of pedagogical progressivism similar to but, nonetheless, different than the cluster of approaches reformers dreamed of installing in schools. These forms of teacher-centered progressivism, with varying strains being evident, existed in a considerable number of schools. A public school version of a progressive classroom emerged that had adapted itself to rigorous climatic conditions: classes with 35 or more students; courses of study with skills and content to cover; teachers untrained in the approaches; an unselected, involuntary mass of students; limited space, supplies, and inhospitable furniture, among other things. Why particular teaching approaches were embraced and others rejected is a puzzle I will return to in the last chapter.

Enough of the familiar rhetoric and symbolism of progressivism existed in these hybrids for school officials and teachers to drum up enthusiasm for doing the impossible with few resources and to point with pride at the minority of teachers who had incorporated these practices into their daily instruction. Yet that very resemblance between practice and the dream drove reformers outside the public schools to condemn these changes as only an insignificant replica of the real thing. Whether thse hybrids were an improvement for children is an important but, nonetheless, separate issue that is beyond the scope of this study. What is evident is that substantial numbers of teachers did, indeed, modify somewhat their classroom repertoires.

4. Where these cores of practice seemed to appear in strength were in school districts where top administrators gave formal approval for the effort, established organizational machinery to carry it out, and persisted in its implementation. Yet even in Denver and New York, these new teaching practices did not penetrate a majority of classrooms.

In rural districts where teachers were isolated, possessed limited schooling,and had insufficient books and materials fewer progressive methods seemed to have spread except for certain practices that were already indigneous to multi-grade, one room schools, i.e. grouping practices. Also islands of progressive practice appeared in those unique schools that grew out of the persistence and dedication of tireless individuals, e.g. Fanny Dunn.

The one effort to spread progressive approaches into rural schools that I reported offers a glimpse of another way to change practice. The Kellogg Foundation in the mid-1930s used a strategy, shaped by the dispersal of teachers in southwestern Michigan that concentrated upon the individual teacher.Through extension courses and summers at colleges, some teachers did alter their classroom methods, according to their reports, but in a limited, hop-scotch manner. Higher percentages of teachers used projects, for instance, than were reported in other studies and the classroom descriptions I analyzed. More research is needed to trace what happened over the years in teachers' rooms. Such evidence could determine if the changes that occurred in one-teacher schools in Michigan were substantively different from those classrooms where systematic, district-wide implementation occurred and whether such changes endured.

5. The dominant pattern of instruction, allowing for the substantial spread of these hybrid progressive practices, remained teacher-centered. Elementary and secondary teachers persisted in teaching from the front of the room, deciding what was to be learned, in what manner, and under what conditions. The primary means of grouping for instruction was the entire class.The major daily classroom activities continued with a teacher telling, explaining, and questioning students while the students listened, answered, read, and wrote. Seatwork or supervised study was an extension of these

activities.

Restrictions on student movement within the classroom loosened somewhat. Teachers permitted more mobility within the class. Movable furniture provided an option for teachers to rearrange desks and chairs into groups although most teachers continued lining them up in rows. Formal recitation, with students rising from their seats to speak, eased. In short, the classroom climate softened sufficiently for teachers and students to cross the formal boundaries that kept them at arm's length from one another.

John Dewey, writing shortly before his death in 1952, did comment on the changes in schools that had occurred as a result of the progressive movement.

> The most widespread and marked success of the progressive movement has been in bringing about a significant change in the life conditions in the classroom. There is a greater awareness of the needs of the growing human being, and the personal relations between teachers and students have been humanized and democratized. But the success in these respects is as yet limited; it is largely atmospheric; it hasn't yet really penetrated and permeated the foundations of the educational institution. The older gross manifestations of the method of education by fear and repression--physical, social and intellectual--which was the established norm for the educational system before the progressive movement began have, generally speaking, been eliminated.... The fundamental authoritarianism of the old education persists in various modified forms.
>
> There is a great deal of talk about education being a cooperative enterprise in which the teachers and students participate democratically, but there is far more talk about it than the doing of it. To be sure, many teachers, particularly in the kindergarten and the elementary schools, take the children into sharing with them to an extent impossible and inconceivable under the old system....
> In the secondary schools ..., however, there isn't much sharing on the part of teachers in the needs and concerns of those whom they teach.... 39

The evidence I have gathered leads me to agree with Dewey's comments. Yet looking back to 1900 I can see that some important changes had occurred. If teacher-centered practice prevailed then and through 1940, there were still substantial numbers of teachers who had modified their classroom teaching in varying degrees that were unapparent in public schools at the turn of the century. Some variety in practice, compared to 1900, is evident. Alternatives to standard teaching methods were available, known widely, used by a minority of teachers, and considered respectable by professional norms. The narrow range of existing practice had stretched to encompass a larger repertoire, although the implementation of those practices were, indeed, limited. Yet I must qualify even this statement since the teachers of 1940 were not the same individuals as those who taught in 1900. There were successive generations of teachers in these decades. Some teachers altered their classroom approach; others were converts coming out of teacher-education institutions who were eager to install new practices; and there were others who tried out new ideas and then returned to familiar techniques. Beyond this qualification, no hedging is necessary when the entire span of a century is viewed to see if constants in practice emerged across different groups of teachers. They do.

NOTES

[1] *Changes in Classroom Teaching Made During 1937-1939 in One-Room Rural Schools in the Area of the Michigan Community Health Project* (Battle Creek, Michigan: W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 1940), p. 129.

[2] *Time*, October 31, 1938, p. 31.

[3] Henry Otto, et. al., *Community Workshops for Teachers in Michigan Community Health Project* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1942), pp. 1, 5.

[4] Otto, p. 3; *Changes in Classroom Teaching*, foreword.

[5] Hermine Marshall, "Open Classrooms: Has the Term Outlived Its Usefulness," *Review of Educational Research*, 51, (Summer, 1981), pp. 185-186.

[6] *Changes in Classroom Teaching*, pp. 50-51.

[7] Evelyn Dewey, *New Schools for Old* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1919); Ellsworth Collings, *An Experiment with a Project Curriculum*, (New York: Macmillan Co., 1923); Fannie Dunn and Marcia Everett, *Four Years in a Country School*, (New York: Teachers College, Bureau of Publications, 1926).

[8] Report of Committee on Experimental Schools, *What Schools Are Doing* (New York: Progressive Education Association, 1937), pp. ii, 3-5, 10, 19, 31, 42-43, 50.

[9] Winn L. Taplin and Irving Pearson, "Contributions to Individual Instruction" in *Newer Types of Instruction in Small Rural Schools*, Yearbook 1938, (Washington: Department of Rural Education, National Educational Association, 1938), pp. 114-115.

[10] Department of the Interior, *Biennial Survey of Education, 1920-1922*, Bulletin 1924, Vol. 1, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1924), pp. 125.

[11] Ibid., p. 127.

[12] Fannie W. Dunn, "Modern Education in Small Rural Schools," *Teachers College Record*, 32, (February, 1931), pp. 411-412.

[13] Department of the Interior, "Status of the Rural Teacher in Pennsylvania,"

Bulletin 1921, no. 34, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1922), pp. 8-9, 21, 33; *Biennial Survey, 1920-1922*, pp. 143-145.

[14] Verne McGuffey, *Differences in the Activities of Teachers in Rural One-Teacher Schools and of Grade Teachers in Cities*, (New York: Teachers College, 1929), pp. 10-13.

[15] "Status of Rural Teacher in Pennsylvania," pp. 18,33.

[16] Ibid., p. 20.

[17] Texas Educational Survey Commission, *Courses of Study and Instruction*, Vol. 5, (Austin, Texas: Texas Educational Survey Commission, 1924), pp. 321, 365.

[18] Ibid., pp. 307, 368, 376.

[19] Ibid., pp. 378-379.

[20] Andrew C. Berg, "A Daily Program for the One-Room Schools of North Dakota," (Unpublished Masters Thesis, University of North Dakota, 1929), pp. 19-20.

[21] Julia Uggen, "A Composite Study of Difficulties of Rural Teachers," *Educational Administration and Supervision*, 24, (March, 1938), pp. 195-202.

[22] *Grade Teacher*, 48, (October, 1930), p. 159.

[23] Ibid., (December, 1930), p. 316.

[24] Louisiana Educational Survey, "The Negro Public Schools," Section B, (Louisiana Educational Survey, 1924), pp. 57-58.

[25] Ibid., pp. 164-165.

[26] Ibid., p. 56.

[27] James Hoetker and William Ahlbrand, "The Persistence of the Recitation," *American Educational Research Journal*, 6, (March, 1969), pp. 145-167.

[28] Texas Educational Survey, pp. 200-201.

[29] Ibid., p. 520.

[30] William C. Bagley, "The Textbook and Methods of Teaching," in National Society for the Study of Education, The Textbook in American Education, Part 2, (Bloomington, Illinois: Public School Publishing Co., 1931), pp. 10-11.

[31] Ibid., p. 15.

[32] Ibid., pp. 17-18, 25.

[33] L.W. Krause, "What Principles of Modern and Progressive Education Are Practiced in Intermediate-Grade Classrooms," Journal of Educational Research, 35, (December, 194[illegible]), pp. 254.

[34] Ibid., pp. 252-254.

[35] Leonard V. Koos and Oliver L. Troxel, "A Comparison of Teaching Procedures in Short and Long Class Periods" The School Review, 35, (May, 1927), p.343; J. M. Hughes and E. O. Melby, "A Cross-Section of Teaching in Terms of Classroom Activities," Educational Method, 10, (October, 1930), pp. 285-289; A.S. Barr, Characteristic Differences in the Teaching Performance of Good and Poor Teachers of the Social Studies, (Bloomington, Illinois: Public School Publishing Co., 1929), pp. 84, 103; Charles W. Bursch, "The Techniques and Results of an Analysis of the Teaching Process in High School English and Social Science Classes," (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Stanford University, 1930), p. 128.

[36] U.S. Office of Education, National Survey of Secondary Education, Summary, Monograph No. 1, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1934), pp. 126, 129.

[37] J.Wayne Wrightstone, Appraisal of Experimental High School Practices, (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, 1936), pp. 21-22, 48-49, 59, 76, 184-185.

[38] This estimate is drawn from the following sources: the descriptions and photos I collected of classrooms instruction; the analysis of 190 teacher self-reports in rural Michigan (1937-1939) classrooms and 55 teachers at Central High School in Washington, D.C. (1925-1938); Joseph Loftus's estimate in New York City at the height of the Activity Program's implementation; and reports from Krause and Bagley who tried to estimate the degree of teacher use of different practices in the 1930s.

[39] Martin Dworkin (ed.) Dewey on Education (New York: Teachers College University Press, 1959), pp. 129-130.

CHAPTER 4

OPEN CLASSROOMS AND ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS: PROGRESSIVISM REVISITED, 1965-1980

In a North Dakota city of 35,000, a university researcher went to an elementary school of 180 children and interviewed a second grade teacher in 1972.

> I: ...To begin with, would you describe for us a typical day in your classroom?
>
> T: ...The morning is spent with children doing the activities they schedule for themselves. We always gather together after lunch in a group and I read to them. At this time, the children also schedule and announce if they are going to put on a play or if they have something to show. We schedule a time for those kinds of activities to occur later in the afternoon. The other children choose whether or not they wish to attend. If they do, they include that in their schedule....
>
> I: Okay. Now I'd like you to describe the classroom....
>
> T: As you come in the door, we have a high shelf area. That is our hospitality counter with our guest book, coffee, juice, and cookies for the visitors and kids. The math center is on the other side of these shelves.There's a bulletin board right there. We have a long combination blackboard-bulletin board at the other end. A typewriter and our creative writing area are in that particular part of the room. Then we have an old trunk. It is our drama trunk and is filled with a variety of hats, dresses, coats, and some props like a cane. Then we have a table six feet in length that has a listening center with records,a view master, filmstrip pre-viewer, and a reading machine....
>
> We have a large carpeted area that has a davenport, lots of pillows and stuffed animals. Bookshelves are on the sides,kind of a reading center is what you'd call that. Going on,we have a game shelf, then the science center, plant and animal center. Then you'd see the cooking area with recipes written on chart paper of all the things we've cooked over the year....
>
> I: On a typical day in the classroom, how many children would be involved in language arts and reading?
>
> T: The only time we would be working as a whole group would be during sustained silent reading. Reading, though, is a part of each child's daily schedule. During the day when they come to that part of their schedule, they go into the reading center.They would read by themselves, to a buddy, to a tutor,or other adult that might be in the room.... [1]

If a time machine could have swept fervent advocates of child-centered practices in the 1920s across decades and sat them down in this second grade North Dakota classroom in the early 1970s, they would have felt far closer in spirit to this primary teacher than to Mrs. Spencer in her 1924 New York City progressive classroom or to Leona Helmick's rural Michigan one-room school in 1938—both of whom tried student-centered approaches. The North Dakota classroom's use of space and furniture, the high level of student participation both in instruction and rule-making, the reach of a curriculum that touched both academic and life-like situations, and the signs of student independence reported by the teacher capture an informal, child-centered classroom. This North Dakota teacher was part of a national surge in lay and professional fervor for open classrooms and alternative schooling that an earlier generation might easily have been labeled progressive.

But the line of descent in instruction between the 1930s and the 1970s is zig-zag and broken. Three decades separate an activity program classroom in New York City from the above second grade in North Dakota or a core classroom in Denver's East High School in 1936 from a school without walls in Washington,D.C. thirty years later. This educational progress, in the words of Philip Jackson, "could be more easily traced by a butterfly than by a bullet."[2]

Rather than retrace the post-World War II history of public schools, I will concentrate on those conditions that seemingly led to the brief enthusiasm for informal and alternative schools which peaked in the early 1970s. By 1980, this impulse for change had almost disappeared from public and professional radar screens as important ways to improve instruction.

In the midst of the media's fascination for informal and free schools, Lawrence Cremin drew parallels between the earlier progressive movement and the then-current ardor for these reforms. He saw two themes in the "new progressive movement" that resonated with the earlier one: child-centeredness and social reform. Locating the rebirth of the child-centered theme in the publication of A.S. Neill's *Summerhill* in 1960, a book that was selling over 200,000 copies annually a decade later, Cremin saw the writings of school critics John Holt, George Dennison, James Herndon, and Herbert Kohl as contributing to the momentum for seeking different kinds of teachers and schooling that would free children's imagination and creativity from deadening routines, tyrannical authority, and passive learning.[3]

At the same time, growing out of the civil rights movement, Cremin pointed out, blacks and other ethnic groups tried to shape schools to fit their aspirations for identity and a sense of community. "We have seen," he commented, "a fascinating interweaving of the child-centered and political reform themes in the literature of the movement, so that open education is viewed as a lever of child liberation on the one hand, and as a lever of radical social change, on the other." Noting differences between the two themes, he found the literature "notoriously atheoretical and ahistorical." Those who established new schools "have not read their Francis W. Parker or their Caroline Pratt ... with the result that boundless energy has been spent in countless classrooms reinventing the pedagogical wheel." Yet he saw a fundamental similarity in both movements: the tool of reform remains the public school. Even Charles Silberman's *Crisis in the Classroom*, "surely the most learned and wide-range analysis to be associated with the present movement," proposed the open classroom as "the keystone in the arch of educational reform."[4]

Leaning heavily upon Cremin's work on the progressive movement, Vito Perrone, Dean of the University of North Dakota's New School (subsequently renamed the Center for Teaching and Learning) and prominent in the national network of reformers committed to informal education, located the roots of open education in progressivism at the turn of the century. Although he did not distinguish between the social reform and child-centered themes in the surge of interest in open classrooms, Perrone described both. He broadened his search for roots beyond progressivism, locating it in the civil rights movement, as did Cremin, but also in the growing public awareness of government policies concerning air pollution, the environment, and Vietnam that were viewed as mindless, inhumane and destructive. Moreover, he credited the English primary schools for giving "considerable stimulus," especially after the publication of Children and Their Primary Schools (1967), to the practice of informal education in the United States.[5]

Roland Barth's search for the sources of open education took him back to 1961. John Dewey is absent from the index of the book. In that year, William Hull, a Cambridge, Massachusetts private school teacher went to England to observe and report on the work of primary schools. His enthusiastic words led to a growing number of American educators traveling to see first-hand the "Leicestershire plan," the "integrated day," and the "developmental classroom." The Education Development Center in Newton, Massachusetts where Hull worked became a center for the exporting of ideas and materials on English primary schools. Tracing the movement from its early locus in an interlocking network of private schools, foundations, and federally-funded curriculum developers fed by Joseph Featherstone's articles in the New Republic and the publication of Silberman's Crisis in the Classroom, to a broader enthusiasm that included state departments of education, universities, public school administrators and teachers, Barth pointed out the unsystematic, uneven yet persistent spread of informal classrooms in the country.[6]

The explosion of articles in newspapers, popular magazines, professional journals, and books—supplemented by television coverage and films—between 1967-1973 documented the array of differences among and between schools categorized within the broad label of informal education: open classrooms, free schools, open education, alternative schools, school-within-a-school, personalized education, humanistic schools, mini-schools,etc. While most of the classes and schools shared a strong distaste for public schools, often running to revulsion on the part of some critics, most professional and lay reformers believed that public school teaching could improve.

In sharpening the focus, I will concentrate on those efforts to alter classroom teaching practices in public elementary and secondary schools. To be clear about what I mean, I will use informal education and open classrooms synonymously in describing changes in elementary schools. At the secondary level, "alternative" will be the preferred term for the range of innovations that spanned the late 1960s and early 1970s. At both levels there were a number of common elements that became targets for classroom reform.

Consider first the open classroom. After the initial surge of fervor for informal schooling ran its course, advocates worried about the headlong rush by school practitioners to freeze into orthodoxy something called an "open classroom". Assumptions about teaching, learning, the nature of the child, and the process of developing an informal setting, they argued, were the essentials—not some product labeled: open classroom. Roland Barth, Joseph Featherstone, Vito Perrone, Charles and Arlene Silberman, Lillian Weber, and others wrote and spoke often about the dangers of missing the fundamental issues in informal education by confusing means and ends or in searching futilely for prescriptions to be grafted onto classrooms. "Tempering a Fad," ran the headline of a New Republic article by Featherstone in 1971. "Although there are many prophets rising in the land," he wrote in another article the same month, "there is no educational Gospel." To no avail.[7]

In 1973, Barth complained that American educators have copied British primary classrooms mindlessly. "We have made a neat package of the vocabulary, the appearance, the materials, and sold it to the schools." Warnings seldom deflected the strong impulse to define what was an open classroom.Those researchers, school administrators, and board members seized by the public and professional passion for informal schools in the early 1970s drew up lists of items that distinguished open classrooms from conventional ones. Some advocates reasoned that there was a risk of making a complex process trivial by such listings yet, they argued, that risk had to be traded off against offering specific directions for converts to build more informal classrooms. Checklists, diagrams, and ways of assessing the degree of openness began to appear by 1971. Language accompanying these lists warned readers that teachers differed among themselves in implementing these classrooms and that introducing new practices occurred unevenly.[8]

Even with these concerns, writers agreed upon some common elements. The style of teaching in open classrooms was flexible both in use of space and methods; students were involved in choosing activities, the classroom was provisioned with abundant materials that were handled directly by students.Curriculum was integrated--"correlated" to an earlier generation. Grouping for instruction was most often by small groups and individuals although the entire class would be taught as one when it was appropriate.[9]

Charles Silberman, sensitive to any distillation that might sap the vitality that teachers brought to open classrooms, warned advocates to be cautious. He feared that unthinking, simple-minded true-believers in open classrooms would do what drunks had done to alcohol: given it a bad name.

> By itself, dividing a classroom into interest areas (learning centers) does not constitute open education;
>
> Creating large open spaces does not constitute open education;
>
> Individualizing instruction does not constitute open education....
>
> For the open classroom ... is not a model or set of techniques; it is an approach to teaching and learning....
>
> Thus, the artifacts of the open classroom--interest areas, concrete materials, wall displays—are not ends in themselves but rather means to other ends.... In addition, open classrooms are organized as to encourage
>
> .active learning rather than passive learning;
>
> .learning and expression in a variety of media, rather than just pencil and paper and the spoken word;
>
> .self-directed, student-initiated learning more than teacher-directed learning; 10

The questions asked in previous chapters about the extent of the spread of progressive practices are now appropriate here. In assessing the degree that informal education penetrated classrooms, I will examine North Dakota, a state that tried to reform teaching practices through an ambitious state-wide certification program, New York City, and Washington, D.C.—all centers of ferment over installing open classrooms between 1967-1975.

The signs of informal education that I will seek out, unfortunately, will be the very artifacts Silberman warned against. If clusters of desks with students facing one another, learning centers, unimpeded student movement within the classroom, small groups and individual instruction, student choice of activities are apparent then some indicators of an open classroom are present. These practices will vary from class to class. But, and the exception should be underscored, these outward clues of openness reveal nothing substantial about teachers' views of learning, childrens' development or concerns for improving student skills. As a behavioral view of the classroom it can be fairly criticized for being narrow and incapable of capturing the holistic qualities inherent to informal education. To such criticisms, I can only say that teachers themselves saw these visible signs as evidence of moving toward informal classrooms and, at the least, such artifacts point to tangible effort on the part of the teacher to incorporate some version of open classrooms that they feel is practical in their circumstances. Finally, I recognize that what I am doing is a primitive reconstruction of a number of key components to classrooms yet as crude as it is, such a reconstruction is still a marginal improvement over studying only statements from educational leaders and rhetoric about teacher fervor or intentions.

NORTH DAKOTA

The Saturday Review, Atlantic, Newsweek, Readers Digest, Life, the New York Times, and the Wall Street Journal within an eleven month period carried feature articles on the new reform sweeping one-room schools, villages, towns, and small cities in the high plains of North Dakota. By 1972, the Public Broadcasting Corporation and CBS had shown documentaries on the state's open classrooms. Hinterland as avante-guarde reform was too irresistible an angle for media to ignore. The Carnegie Corporation-sponsored study that Charles Silberman had published as Crisis in the Classroom devoted a chapter to boosting the changes occurring in the state. In all of these feature articles, professional journals, and books the University of North Dakota's New School of Behavioral Studies on Education, (hereafter called the New School), played a primary role in generating ideas, funds, teacher-training, and support for informal education.[11]

To understand how open classrooms took root in a rural, politically conservative state and found leadership in an institution with a New York-sounding name led by a Michigan educator whom teachers, state legislators, and children called "Vito," requires explanation. The general outline of the story has been told in a number of places. A study in 1967 documented that North Dakota was dead last among all states in level of preparation for elementary teachers--two out of every five lacked a bachelor's degree--and the range of school opportunities available to its grade school children (e.g. few kindergarten classes, special teachers, services for the handicapped,etc.). To upgrade the 40% of the teachers lacking college degrees (average age 43), the study staff recommended that an experimental teacher education school be established to train these less-than-degree teachers in ways that would match the circumstances many of them came from: small schools with students scattered over several grades. Chance brought Featherstone's New Republic articles on British primary schools to the attention of the staff, who saw a match between informal education and the needs of small,isolated schools in a rural state. The New School, as part of the University of North Dakota, was created not only to certify teachers but to introduce "radical" changes in how teachers taught, their use of the curriculum, and how classroom decisions were made.[12]

Hiring Vito Perrone as the new Dean, sources agreed, provided the ingenuity and emotional electricity to power the infant venture. Perrone hired like-minded teachers some of whom were knowledgable about English primary schools or had worked at the Education Development Center in Newton, Massachusetts where materials for open classrooms were developed and published. Perrone criss-crossed the state telling legislators, school officials, teachers, and parents of the virtues of open classrooms and New School interns (young men and women who replaced less-than-degree teachers who then went to the New School to get their degree and certification). Using imagery of rural schools that parents found familiar, especially many grades in one class and close ties to the surrounding community, Perrone and his colleagues promoted informal education.[13]

Between 1968-1973, over fifty districts (about 20% of the state total) with 80 schools (enrolling about half of the state's elementary school children) had joined the New School in its venture. The campaign of the New School and other state colleges to aid teachers earn a degree reduced sharply the percentage of less-than-degree teachers from 59% in 1968 to 13% in 1973.[14]

Interns introduced open classroom practices in Starkweather, Minto, Devil's Lake, Fort Yates, Fargo, Bismarck, Minot, and Grand Forks. City, town, village and one-teacher school--all were touched directly or indirectly by New School interns or federally-funded outreach programs in the initial five years. After 1973, however, federal funding of New School support programs across the state evaporated. Outreach activities dwindled to include only what those motivated and energetic New School teachers did on their own time.[15]

Cautious about freezing open classroom concepts into a gospel, Perrone and his colleagues also knew that parents had to both understand and accept these different approaches to teaching and school life. The North Dakota version of informal education contained the core of approaches found in British primary schools with the addition of areas that the New School stressed, particularly on student involvement in classroom decisions, student interaction used as a way of teaching and learning, evaluation of important non-academic growth, and parent involvement.[16]

In determining to what extent open classrooms spread in the state, keep in mind that no other state in the nation had embraced as a matter of policy the introduction of open classrooms. The uniqueness and reach of North Dakota's effort prevents comparisons with other states and should be considered in any assessment of implementation. Open classrooms did spread throughout the state in the early 1970s. In Fargo, for example, in 1969, at the request of the superintendent, the New School established a center for interns at Madison, a school with a record of persistently low student performance. The two principals who served Madison between 1969-1977 were both affiliated with the New School.

Principal Vincent Dodge described the changes that had occurred by 1973. Walls between classrooms were torn down. Cross-grade teams were organized. Learning centers in math, science, social studies, creative writing,reading, art--containing individual stations for students--were used to enrich, motivate and link the community to the school between thirty minutes to an hour a day. In addition, students made tables, chairs, carrels, magazine racks, supply bins, games, puzzles out of tri-wall cardboard and other materials. Finally, no letter grades appeared on report cards. Checklists of specific academic skills, cooperative behaviors, and interpersonal skills were sent home twice a year and two formal teacher-parent conferences were held. In short, this description includes all the artifacts of open classrooms as well as the spirit of teacher-pupil planning and decision-making, according to the principal. The Fargo-Moorhead Forum ran articles on Madison, Clara Barton, Lewis and Clark, and Horace Mann schools describing centers, small group activities, and freedom of student movement in classrooms. "Fargo Schools Lead Education Revolution," one headline proclaimed.[17]

Less than a hundred miles north of Fargo, Grand Forks, in the words of Superintendent Wayne Worner in 1969 had become a "mecca for innovation." declared that there is not one school in the district "where you find thirty students in a box." The Washington elementary school established a formal relationship with the New School, itself located a few miles away. Larry Hoiberg, principal of the kindergarten through sixth grade school of 220 students (1970), described how Washington merged the "child's school world and his home world." Photos and narrative captured small groups, learning centers, students' free movement, and flexible space arrangments in which New School interns, parent volunteers, and aides worked.[18]

In another Grand Forks school, Jerry Abbott told how a federal grant to introduce aides into a newly-built school helped create an open classroom program at the Kelly School. Centers, small groups of students at clustered desks, individualized reading programs, abundant materials, and a dozen other outward signs pointed to the presence of open classroom and altered teaching practice. "What happens to the traditional role of the teacher?" Abbott asked. "She is no longer at the front of the room directing the same ... lesson for all children. As the children work in teams she is free to move among them and to help those who need it."

Elsewhere in the state visitors and reporters noted the appearance of informal classrooms in unlikely places. Arlene Silberman followed students around in classrooms in Starkweather (population 250) where the school of 200 children in grades 1-12 had four elementary teachers (all New School degree candidates) holding classes "more exciting and certainly more innovative than anything one can find in the Scarsdales, Winnetkas, Shaker Heights, and Palo Altos of the United States." She visited classrooms supplied with pegboards, cash registers, and Cuisenaire rods that were divided into math, reading, science, and art areas. She saw small groups of students working together, some individual children by themselves, and others at a table with the teacher,some in corners or sprawled on a carpet. Classrooms in Edmore (population 405), Lakota (population 1,658), and Minot (population 33,477) staffed by New School graduates were also visited. Chapter seven in Crisis in the Classroom, based upon Silberman's research in the state, resonates with the vitality of the informal instruction she saw carried out in schools across the state. Articles in Life, Saturday Review, newspapers and New School publications trace the spread of open classrooms in Devil's Lake, Minto, and dozens of other one-teacher and city schools in the state.[20]

Trying to document the extent that open classrooms in various forms spread through the state or the persistence in these practices over time is more difficult than simply counting instances of such classrooms. Quite similar to assessing the spread of progressivism, the problem is split between determining the degree of implementation among classrooms labeled open and the inevitable variations between classrooms in which informal practices (centers, small groups,etc.) have been used.

The first part of the problem involves using the global construct "open classroom" with teacher reports and direct observations providing the data from which to draw conclusions. Such data is tough to interpret because of the varied meanings that teachers and observers pack into the phrase "open classrom." As I have already suggested in analyzing progressivism, informal education or open classroom as an unidimensional construct is less useful than a construct composed of varied elements which teachers have selectively and unevenly put into practice.

The second part of the problem deals with the sources of information themselves. Among researchers, there has been a growing awareness that teacher reports of progressive and open classroom practices tend to overestimate what observers in classrooms record. Thus, teacher and principal reports of how much informal practices have spread tend to be inflated. The evidence I have collected on North Dakota is vulnerable on these points.[21]

One way to determine the extent of informal practices in the state is to find out the number of New School interns and graduates that worked in the schools. By 1973, over 500 New School experienced teachers and interns had taken their ideas of open classrooms into 80 schools or almost 15% of the total schools in the state. Whether or not these New School-trained teachers continued their activities over the years is an issue explored in a study completed by a New School researcher in 1975. Through questionnaires he compared a sample of 56 New School interns' classrooms with a random sample of 342 North Dakota teachers on a number of dimensions related to informal teaching: the extent that teachers dealt with children individually; the degree to which the teacher centralized or dispersed classroom decisionmaking; different types of classroom activities and tasks; the linkages or integration of these experiences; and the extent that all of the teacher's arrangements and classroom organization contributed to children learning from one another.[22]

The researcher concluded that New School (by this time renamed the Center for Teaching and Learning) interns "have classrooms significantly more open than those of teachers in general in North Dakota." While graduates of the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) maintained their commitment to informal education, there was "a tendency for their overall attitude toward open education to moderate."[23]

Although the study is limited, these results drawn from typical teachers in the state indirectly suggest that most teachers did not convert their classrooms into open ones, defined by New School criteria. Buttressing that inference is a small study completed by a University of North Dakota researcher who asked teachers to describe the use of math materials such as fraction discs, Cuisenaire rods, chips, etc. in their classrooms. These materials were common to informal classrooms since they lent themselves to individual and group use by children in centers; hence, the extent of their use becomes a rough proxy for the diffusion of informal techniques. Almost 1000 teachers (or about one-third of those in the state) from 116 schools replied to the questionnaire. Ninety percent of the teachers reported that they had two or more of these manipulative materials in their rooms. Teacher use of these materials, however, was low. Almost half of the teachers said they used them "a little" and only seven percent said they used them "extensively." Also, the researcher found a strong relationship between materials children handle and the existence of learning centers, that is, the teachers who reported frequent use of rods, chips, discs, and metric materials were also teachers who reported they had learning centers. Of almost 1000 teachers, 25% said they had learning centers with the highest percentage located at kindergarten (40%) and shrinking until the fifth and sixth grades where 14% and 15% of those teachers reported centers.[24]

The impact of the New School in disseminating ideas and practices about informal classrooms is demonstrable. The Johnny Appleseeds of open classrooms from the New School sowed and reaped across the state. Data, however, show the limited extent and staying power of the changes. Far more needs to be collected, yet what there is suggests that many North Dakota teachers between 1968-1975 adopted in varying degrees different versions of the open classroom as defined and altered by the New School and individual teachers.

In 1981, I spent a week in Grand Forks and Fargo visiting six schools and observing 63 teachers (or 20% of the grades 1-6 staffs in these two cities) to see what teachers did in their classrooms. Of the 63 teachers, eight were New School graduates. I spent time at Madison and other schools that had been sites for interns and university faculty.

Both cities had about a dozen elementary schools with class sizes averaging twenty-five students. At least one out of every four elementary schools in each city contained open space, that is, large spaces separated by movable partitions, eight-feet high dividers, or home-made walls built from book cases and portable blackboards. In both cities, teachers told me that they were pleased that the central administration were about to act on their requests for walls so that each teacher would have a separate room, including Fargo's Madison elementary where walls had been knocked down a decade earlier to create spacious double rooms. The teachers I observed had advanced training beyond the bachelors' degree. Rooms were copiously stocked with overhead projectors, sets of books, math and science materials and equipment. Project activities were evident.

What patterns of instruction did I see while in classrooms of the six schools?

Table 7. PATTERNS OF INSTRUCTION: GRAND FORKS AND FARGO, 1981

	Teacher Centered Instruction %	Mixed Pattern %	Student Centered Instruction %	Number of Classes
Class Arrangement	43	30	27	(63)
Group Instruction	62	25	13	
Classroom talk	60	24	16	
Student Movement	37	0	63	
Class Activities	59	30	11	

Classes with One or More Centers...32%

Keep in mind that my observations lasted between fifteen to thirty minutes per teacher, generally occurred in the mornings when elementary teachers concentrate upon teaching basic skills, and involved more than one teacher since in some buildings from a certain vantage point I could watch three to four teachers work with their classes simultaneously. This manner of observation is akin to a series of snapshots.

The graph shows that a majority of the time teachers taught the class as an entire group, talked most of the time and structured classroom activities that concentrated upon listening to the teacher and working as a class on workbooks or seatwork. More than half the teachers arranged the furniture in ways that encouraged students to talk with one another. Student movement inside the classroom was permitted without seeking permission from the teacher in two of every three classrooms I visited. Small group and individual instruction and student-centered class activities occurred infrequently.

In almost one-third of the classrooms, there was at least one learning center. Four fifth and sixth grade teachers at Grand Forks' Ben Franklin school used one dozen centers for that part of the morning or afternoon when language arts and science was scheduled. They were the exception, however. When I asked teachers how and when they used the centers, invariably the response was before and after scheduled activities like reading, language arts, lunch, recess, and as either enrichment, a reward for good behavior, or practice of skills already taught. Except for the four teachers mentioned above, centers were used as a periodic supplement to the existing program.

Teachers set aside time for each task in 27% of the classrooms where a daily schedule was posted. Of the eight New School graduates teaching in the schools I visited, and I had no way of knowing how typical they were of New School alumni, two used centers extensively for portions of the school day. In the other six classrooms I saw no evidence of centers. Four of those six had daily schedules on blackboards listing the tasks the class would do for the day.

By 1981, elements of open classrooms could be seen in these teacher rooms: student mobility, learning centers and arrangment of classroom furniture. In organizing the class for instruction through grouping and classroom tasks assigned to students, however, the primary mode of instruction in these 63 classroom clustered around a variety of teacher-centered practices.

Turn now to the very different setting of New York City in the 1970s for a look at the enthusiasm for informal schooling that appeared and richocheted like a cue ball between 110 Livingston Street and schools across the city.

NEW YORK CITY

Compare the school system in 1940 with 1980. There were still about one million students in nearly one thousand buildings with over 50,000 teachers. There was still a Board of Education and a superintendent, although the latter's title had been upgraded to Chancellor. When I visited DeWitt Clinton High School bolted-down desks, somewhat scarred, still sat in rows, in classroom after classroom.[25]

An inch beneath this surface familiarity, however, a number of profound alterations had occurred in four decades to the New York City schools. Consider:

- Wave after wave of newcomers since World War II changed a school system that was predominately white in 1940 to one that was majority Black and Hispanic, with heavy percentages of poor children from all ethnic backgrounds by 1980.
- One of ten children attended private school before World War II; four decades later, one out of eight attended private schools.

> . In 1940, New York City schools were viewed as national leaders in public education. The Activity Program, elite high schools, high test scores produced much competition for teacher and administrative vacancies. By 1980, filling classrooms with qualified teachers became a major task. Test scores, reported annually now in newspapers, had been in a downward slide for over a decade with just a glimmer of turnaround evident. Retrenchment measures resulting from the city's unprecedented fiscal emergency had driven class sizes up into the mid-30s and low-forties, stripped schools of critical support services, and buried a number of novel efforts to improve schooling. The image of the school system was that of a troubled, chaotic organization unable to cope with the problems at hand. 26

Signs of those changes in four decades were posted in the number of superintendents that went in and out of the revolving doors of 110 Livingston Street. While four school chiefs served the system in the first forty years of the century, six sat behind the top desk in the schools since 1960. State laws had mandated the division of the school system into thirty-one school districts (kindergarten through eighth grade schools), each run by a community school board empowered to hire and fire its own teachers and administrators. Protracted and divisive teacher strikes and parent boycotts closed schools down numerous times between 1960-1970.

What had changed more than anything were public attitudes. Belief in the legitimacy of the school board and staff as guardians of children's intellectual and moral development had eroded. During the post-World War II years confidence diminished in the public schools to do what they were supposed to do. In those years, New Yorkers heard of school officials' corruption in constructing new schools. They saw school boards and superintendents paddling first on one side of the canoe, then on the other side, keeping a straight course but reluctant to deal frankly with the issue of desegregation. They watched the uncertain, if not fumbling, attempts of top administrators trying to wrestle with teacher union and parent activism. And New York parents with children in the schools experienced the results of squabbles between the Board and unions and parent groups in repeated strikes and boycotts that shut schools down for all children—reaching a crescendo of raucous anarchy between 1968-1970 when confrontations between union members and community-control advocates unleashed racial bigotry, saw parents and teacher-activists arrested, and led to intervention by the State Commissioner of Education and the legislature. Substantial changes in the governance and organization of the entire school system resulted. As the city watched these events unfold, official charges of incompetence, public pleas for improvement, and failed efforts to negotiate differences were displayed in daily newspapers, on nightly television news, and national journals throughout the 1960s and 1970s.[27]

While intense criticism of public schools was familiar to New Yorkers—recall the 1912 Hanus Report and barrages of charges that Superintendents William Maxwell and his successors absorbed in their tenures--the recent period differed because criticism was somehow accompanied by a hemorrhaging of the public confidence in the schools' capacity to improve the lot of children. Within this political context of the late 1960s, open classrooms and alternative schools popped up like mushrooms after a rain.

A vignette of a school program getting underway one morning in Harlem's P.S. 123.

> At 9:30 A.M. teacher aides and student teachers begin to line the small, L-shaped section of the corridor with tables and chairs. Out of a storage room they bring out boxes full of materials and spread the contents on the tables. There are scales, Cuisenaire rods, water vessels, musical instruments, a dozen different kind of math puzzles, counting devices, hexagons, trapezoids, animals, clay.... Singly, and in pairs, threes and fours, children filter into the corridor from five classrooms, the doors of which are open and inside which teachers are conducting lessons....
>
> The corridor has become another kind of place. Some children move directly to activities, having learned the corridor's offerings.

> Others, sometimes with a friend in tow, shop around before settling down to one thing.... At one table a four year old girl is manipulating a game about people, identifying relationships. Behind, a six year old has spread herself on a piece of newsprint on the floor while a student teacher traces her form in crayon, which she will then measure in blocks and hang on the wall.
>
> Other children are pacing off distances, measuring with string.... A few feet away a group of four has been working steadily for an hour weighing shoes....
>
> Children return to their classes, others come out, work continues in all the rooms.... Inside the room, run along formal lines, there is a striking absence of restlessness. Children are hard at work despite the sounds and movements from the corridor. In sharp contrast, a second grade class next door operates informally in small clusters of children.... By 11 A.M. the corridor begins to clear. Materials, tables, and chairs have been returned to their storeroom. Left on the corridor walls are the paper cutouts of children figures. 28

This description of the first Open Corridor program, as gently and astutely introduced by City College of New York Professor Lillian Weber in 1967, illustrates another variation of informal education adapted to American conditions. Weber had spent a year and a half visiting British primary schools and had written about them.29

In 1967 she found an opportunity in P.S. 123 to apply her ideas of informal schooling by placing student teachers there and in nearby schools. In subsequent years, Weber pursued her convictions about the central importance of the teacher as decision-maker, teachers joining the program voluntarily, informal classrooms composed of children with different abilities, and a deep aversion to labels about openness. Her strategy of change, working as a professor and later as director of a center for informal education--both outside of the school system--was encouraging a series of small changes taken individually and voluntarily by teachers and schools, to produce, over time, a transformed teacher and school. Never, she said, "was it our intention to convince the whole New York City school system that they should go this way. Instead, she wanted "to work in a small way to create an exemplar of what could be possible in the public schools...."30

From five kindergarten-second grade teachers in P.S. 123, a network of contacts spread outward in Manhattan until in 1971 ten schools and 80 classrooms were formally linked to Weber's City College Advisory Service to Open Corridors which became the Workshop Center for Open Education. Four years later, an inventory of schools and teachers affiliated with the Open Corridors program listed 17 schools and 156 teachers with almost 4000 children in classes.[31]

By 1978 when Weber's friends and admirers, including Charles Silberman and Vito Perrone, gathered to celebrate a decade of her investment in informal education, 26 elementary and two secondary schools had 200 teachers with almost 5000 children in open classrooms tied directly to City College. In addition, over a thousand teachers, aides, principals, and parents visited the Workshop Center annually.[32]

Elsewhere in the city, whole schools and individual teachers adopted versions of the open classroom on their own initiative or with the help of of other privately and publicly-funded groups working out of universities and store fronts. Other teachers, unaware of the innovations or determined to construct a form of open classroom tailored to their style and students, just went ahead and did it. While Herb Kohl and Gloria Channon wrote books about their personal odysseys in uncertainly opening up their classrooms, other teachers wrote of similar journeys--some of them painfully unsuccessful--in Masters' theses.[33]

Between 1970-1973 national interest in open classrooms surged forward. Locally, a similar welling up of enthusiasm among parents and teachers occurred amidst the heavy emotional fallout from the 1968-1969 school year of three teacher strikes and the creation of over thirty community school districts. It occurred also in the midst of a year-long national search for a person to assume the newly-created top post of Chancellor. After Sargent Shriver, Arthur Goldberg, Ramsey Clark, and Ralph Bunche--all national figures--had turned down the Board of Education, Harvey Scribner, Vermont's Commissioner of Education, accepted the post in 1970.[34]

During these turbulent years, the naming of Scribner as Chancellor and the forthright public position taken by United Federation of Teachers' Albert Shanker in favor of informal education intersected neatly for a moment in time, raising hopes for the future of open classrooms in the city. Fifty-six year old Harvey Scribner, former rural Maine teacher and Teaneck (New Jersey) superintendent prior to his stint in Vermont, rang all the bells that informal classroom enthusiasts wanted desperately to hear. His "Vermont Design for Education" (1968) laid out seventeen objectives that captured the main tenets of informal education. He quoted John Holt in his speechs. He met with Gloria Channon, a fifth grade teacher and author of a book on her conversion to open classrooms. He drew often upon his experience as a rural teacher who tried to get out of the way of students who wanted to learn, as he often said. "There is no one design of education that can serve the needs of all people," he told a reporter. "We must give children an opportunity to learn in their particular manner," he said, "to proceed at their own rate, to work at their own level. We must give them many alternatives."[35]

Pledging to make decentralization work and to reform schooling in order to produce more choices for students in classrooms and schools, Scribner visited schools, spoke to teachers and administrators frequently, and sought out like-minded people in the city in an effort to build coalitions for change.[36]

Working the other side of the street, Albert Shanker said to a reporter:

"We intend to get teachers to read Silberman (Crisis in the Classroom) and see him as a hero, a constructive critic." Endorsing the informal classroom as a vehicle for reforming schools, the teacher union president pledged to inform union leadership of the merits of open classrooms, sponsor community forums, and, support system-wide efforts in that direction. At a later city-wide meeting of teachers, Shanker urged that parents be permitted to "shop around" to find an open classroom. The new Chancellor and savvy union president publicly supporting informal education was, indeed, a special moment. It lasted no longer than a sand castle in the incoming tide.[37]

Two and a half years into the job, Scribner announced he would leave the post when his contract ended in June, 1973. His explanation: "a widening gap of confidence" between the Board of Education and himself. Trying to reform the New York City schools, Scribner discovered, was akin to trying to turn around the liner Queen Elizabeth 2 in the East River. By 1973, even before Scribner left, Shanker's public statements on the joys of open classrooms were hard to locate. By 1975, union-supported Teacher Centers largely ignored informal classrooms as appropriate targets for teacher change. Budget cuts, ballooning class sizes, staff firings, shifting teachers to other assignments, far more emphasis on improving test scores, and basic skills instruction replaced talk about reform and informal classrooms.[38]

Why the brief moment of reform hopes disappeared is of much interest to me but is of less importance in this study than determining what most teachers did in their classrooms while talk from union leaders and administrators concentrated upon opening up classrooms and alternatives. Evidence that hundreds of teachers began centers, rearranged furniture, provisioned their rooms, taught small groups, and prized student participation has been presented. But there were over 600 elementary schools and over 25,000 teachers. To what extent did elements of open classrooms appear among them? The answer here is similar to the one offered before on progressive practices two generations earlier. Definitions of openness varied; teachers were selective in what they introduced; and the pattern of adoption was uneven in schools--closer to the spattering of ink than an inkblot.

What can be said with a modest degree of confidence is that the spread of open classrooms, however defined and implemented did not exceed the generous 25% of teachers estimated by Loftus as were using activity methods in their classrooms just prior to World War II. Recall that he made his estimate after years of high interest and a six-year formal experiment sanctioned and promoted by the Superintendent and staff that involved over 75,000 children in nearly seventy schools.

Scribner served less than three years; he shaped no explicit and sustained set of policies and organizational procedures; nor did his ideas enjoy widespread support among central administration and middle-level managers. Words were simply insufficient to generate changes beyond 110 Livingston St. Also, a general political instability pervaded the system with the birth of thirty community school districts coming in the backwash of acrimonious teacher strikes. Thus, no organizational drive for adopting open classrooms existed. Lacking a formal institutional framework that could boost open classrooms, teachers embraced informal practices on an ad hoc, scattered basis, finding occasional support in colleges, private groups, or cadres of like-minded individuals elsewhere in the system. How many schools and how many teachers eventually implemented open classroom practices is impossible to determine with any precision since no formal classroom survey was ever undertaken in the 1967-1975 period.

If a survey had been done and it showed that more than one teacher in four or five had maintained an open classroom, even defined broadly, I would have asked for a recount. The basis for my estimate is narrow, however. While City College, Fordham, Queens College, Bank Street, and the Creative Teaching Workshop were active in spreading informal classroom techniques, data for the Open Corridors is available and provides some basis for an estimate. In the 17 elementary schools in 1975 where Open Corridors existed there was a total student population of about 13,000 and around 550 teachers. Of that population, over 3000 students and 150 teachers were part of the program. By 1978, in 26 elementary schools linked with Workshop on Open Education there were 3900 children and 180 teachers involved in the program. These schools had an estimated 21,000 children and 800 teachers. And this level of involvement was in schools where one would expect diffusion to be contagious since non-open classroom teachers worked next to colleagues heavily involved in the program. No doubt some schools had heavy participation because of the length of time the school had been associated with City College and other schools may have recently joined.[39]

In other schools across the city where teachers lacked outside support from a university or advisers the level of involvement, I would guess, was lower. None of this is to suggest that the influence of the Workshop on Open Education and similar efforts was insubstantial. Teachers trained in Open Corridors took administrative posts throughout the system and worked elsewhere in school programs (e.g.Teacher Centers). Also, when funding was cut for Open Corridors advisers, community boards often found accounts elsewhere in the budget to continue the work of consultants.[40]

Another basis for the estimate comes from the numerous reports I have read of New York City teachers in these years and how they wrestled with the daily issues of steering 30 or more students through a half-dozen subjects in self-contained classrooms. Some of these teachers, intrigued by talk about informal classrooms, gingerly tried some techniques; most seemed too busy, too exhausted, too intimidated by superiors, too intent upon surviving,or simply disagreed with the direction.They hesitated to try out new approaches that required preparation of materials, more contact with children in and out of the classroom, and possibly extra time at home working on classroom tasks.

In the late 1960s, a number of teacher accounts described conditions under which teachers taught and what they did in their classrooms. The school Gerald Levy wrote about in Ghetto School, located in a mid-town slum,had 1300 children and seventy teachers, half of whom were inexperienced and newly-appointed. He records passionately and with much disgust how they stumbled through 1967-1968, a year marked by a wildcat teacher's strike, parent action, and administrative fecklessness. Order replaced learning as the primary goal. Except for the kindergarten teacher and one second grade teacher, instruction was a series of mindless routines designed, he said, to keep children quiet and busy at their desks. Reading like a topsy-turvy version of Joseph Rice's dreary chronicles of New York classrooms seven decades earlier, the book portrays both children and teachers with a strong distaste for schools.[41]

Gloria Channon's frank description of how she introduced twenty-two Harlem fifth graders to an open classroom in 1967-1968 contains unsparing administrative memos and observations drawn from a painful internal struggle to free herself of a mind-set that a dozen years in New York schools had imprinted upon her. From the Staff Bulletin, a 110 Livingston publication, of January 31, 1968:

> .During recitation lessons, pupils should raise hands to indicate desire to make a contribution, they should be encouraged to speak in full sentences....
>
> .Pupils must ask permission to go to the bathroom....

> .Gum chewing is forbidden anywhere in the school building. The teacher must set the example....
>
> .Pupils should empty their desks regularly under the routine supervision of the teacher and everything other than approved books and materials should be discarded on the spot or taken home at 3:00.... 42

Channon observed that by the third grade the New York curriculum "gets whipped into shape."

> Children sit at their desks for hours. Notebooks and textbooks become the main focus of their activity . Lessons are formally organized into spelling, penmanship, reading, composition, and math. Silence and good behavior are at a premium, now as never before. 43

In another Harlem school of 1350 children, Donna DeGaetani chronicled her experiences in a building dominated by a principal she feared and where parents were pushing for open classrooms in 1972—her third as a teacher. Her frankness is disarming. DeGaetano described her reactions to a formal observation by her principal.

> Knowing that she was to observe you teaching resulted in such actions as adjusting shades to regulation height, picking up stray pieces of paper ... dropped on the floor, bringing your bulletin boards up to date, and prepping the children on their behavior.... I admit I was a coward, cowed by an authority I did not believe in but had not the strength to challenge. 44

After this principal retired, four teachers (of about thirty) in grades 1-3 opened up their classrooms slowly through centers and activities chosen by students for an hour or so a day. Proud as she was of her progress, the weight of the Metropolitan Achievement Tests bore down on the teacher. "Too often the cloud of achievement tests," she wrote, "pressures teachers into compromises.... I know I will teach my children how to take the Test, although I realize this is basically against what I believe in." Why did she succumb to the pressure?

> I do not have the energy nor, at this point, the willingness to fight the system. I know the scores of open education classes in our school will be compared with those of traditional classes. The comparison is itself fallacious. I know that .... But most parents don't. Many administrators don't and the system doesn't. 45

In a nearby school similar to DeGaetani's, Alicia Montalvo kept a diary of her third year as a primary teacher in 1971-1972. The six other first grade teachers had classes "conducted in the traditional manner. Each child has an assigned seat and all tables face the front of the room." In order to start an open classroom, a "Bank Street" one as she defined it, "I had to get special permission from the principal." Because she often stayed after 3:00—the time in the contract that teachers could leave school--to prepare materials and change centers, the principal called her in to say that she had to leave by 3:30 because no one could be responsible for her after that time. "I really don't know if this whole idea of mine is worth the effort," she wrote in her diary for that day, "I'm so disgusted." She got even angrier later in the year when she switched the children from their work with Cuisenaire rods to the conventional way of teaching addition and subtraction after the principal told her that "the children were going to be tested to see whether or not they were learning in the open classroom."[46]

In P.S. 198 (Manhattan), Dorothy Boroughs, fourth grade teacher of thirty students, unlike her colleagues described above, enjoyed an easy-going relationship with her principal. In a unique series of almost a dozen articles for the New York Times, Joseph Lelyveld spent an entire school year (1970-1971) periodically visiting Borough's class.[47]

"A brisk, energetic, and strongly committed young teacher who is usually among the first at school to punch in," Lelyveld described Boroughs' as a teacher dedicated to getting children to read at or above the fourth grade level. He described her when she laughed, scolded, pleaded with children, and showered them with a mixture of touching praise and earnest demands. The children responded with openness and seriousness, if not outright affection for their teacher. Students sat at clustered desks facing one another, working individually, in small groups or as an entire class on tasks that the teacher had assigned. High teacher expectations for achievement and behavior were evident daily in a vibrant charm that few children could resist.[48]

Lelyveld also provides a glimpse of some organizational processes that affect how and what Boroughs did. Take, for example, the visit of her supervisor, assistant principal Edmund Fried, to evaluate her teaching of a social studies lesson. Sitting in the back of the room, Boroughs gave him the daily plan composed of the aims, procedures, and activities that she intended to follow as she taught the lesson.

> Miss Boroughs had been worrying about the lesson plan for a week (Lelyveld writes) but had not actually committed any thoughts to paper until the lunch hour that day. Normally she prepares lesson plans to satisfy the demands of her supervisor but never works from them.... 49

After teaching the lesson on explorers, Boroughs brought the period to a close with the question: "why are we studying the explorers?"

> 'Because he's here to watch,' said Shaun Sheppard knowingly, nodding in the direction of Mr. Fried.
>
> 'Fooled you, Shaun,' the assistant principal declared, 'I know about them already.'
>
> On his way out, Mr. Fried noted that Pizzaro was the only Spanish explorer mentioned in the text who had not been mentioned in the lesson. He told Miss Boroughs that later on he would go over with her the comments that filled two sheets on his clipboard. 50

Or consider Boroughs exposure to the open classroom. In the spring semester she had signed up with a handful of other P.S. 198 teachers to take an after-school course on open classrooms offered by Hunter College. After hearing from her student teacher about three teachers at P.S. 42 on the Lower East Side who had opened up their classrooms without funds or outside help, Boroughs got permission from her principal to spend a morning in these teachers' rooms. The Hunter College class and these visits spurred Boroughs' thinking and a mild rearrangement of furniture into one math corner. When two of the P.S. 42 teachers were invited by the professor to speak to the P.S. 198 class, the principal announced on the public address system that the entire staff of 55 were invited to hear the teachers describe how they opened up their classes. Twelve teachers, most of whom were registered for the class, showed up at the meeting.[51]

Boroughs was interested in an open classroom. "But," Lelyveld wrote, "she seemed uncertain as to how far or fast she herself would moved in that direction. By the end of the week, "debate over educational theory had faded. The supreme reality was Spring."[52]

Not far from P.S. 198, poet Philip Lopate worked in P.S. 90 in the early 1970s as a writer charged to help teachers and children to write creatively. Working in a bilingual, experimental school with open classrooms Lopate received advice from a friendly veteran teacher.

> This school may look free and groovy on the surface but don't be fooled, there's a lot of conservative feeling. Nothing from the outside will take root at P.S. 90 unless it's introduced very cautiously and slowly.

After being in the school for awhile, Lopate noticed some classes were mostly white while others were predominately Black and Puerto Rican. Denise Loften explained why.

> Denise said the reason for this was that the parents were given a choice at the beginning of the year whether they wanted to place their children in 'open' or 'more formal' classrooms. The white, liberal parents of the Upper West Side tended to select open classrooms. The parents from ethnic minorities opted more for traditional classes, feeling that open education might be soft on basic skills.... 53

From these teacher and journalist accounts a flavor for the organizational context, not to mention the larger environment outside of the school, suggests that versions of open classrooms spread in a hop-scotch manner, following personal contacts and random information, yet seldom dominating an entire school.

Supporting this observation are limited data drawn from over thirty elementary classroom descriptions from across the city.

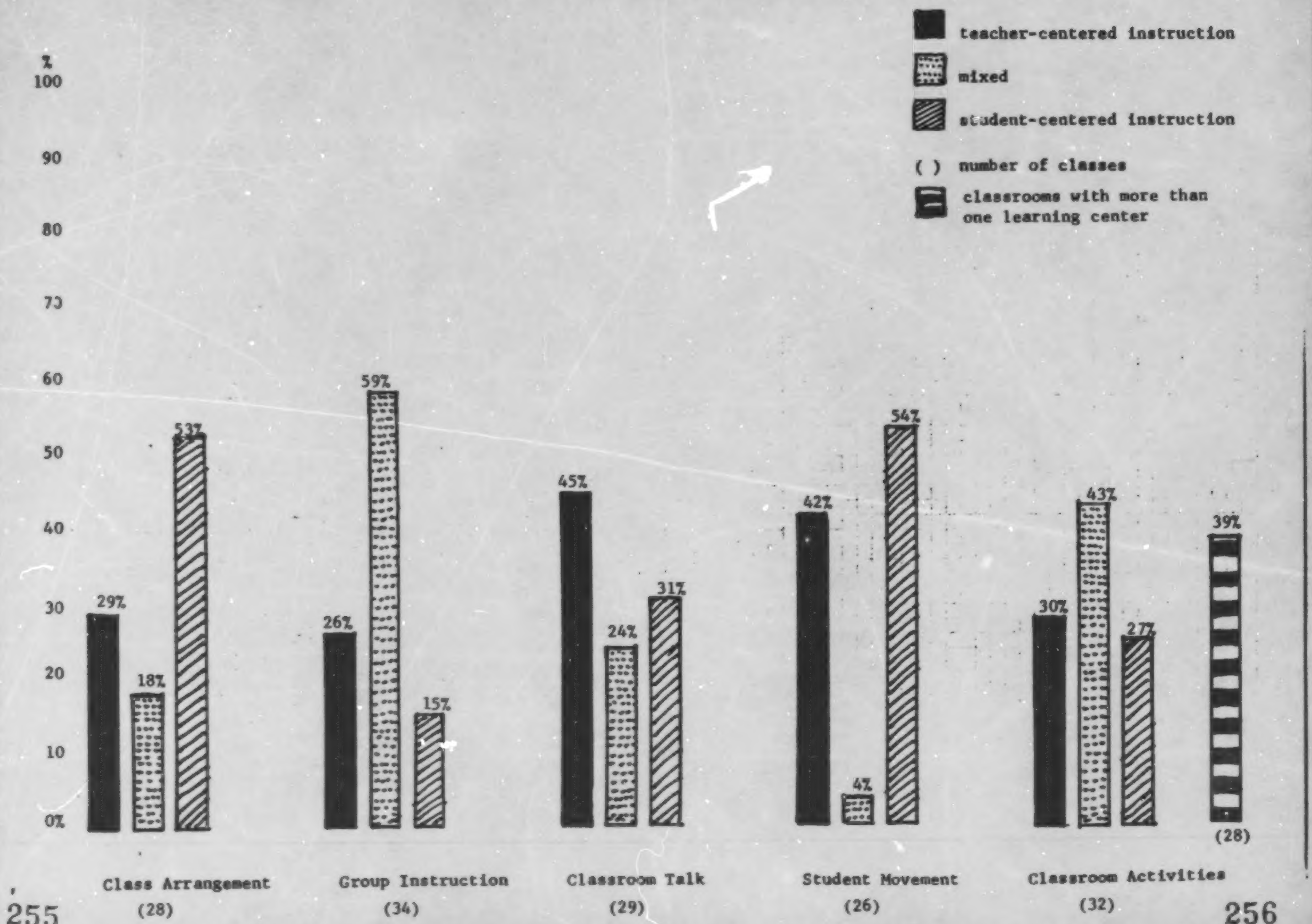
The graph shows that student-centered practices occurred in over half of the classes in furniture arrangement and student movement but in grouping for instruction and classroom tasks in no more than one-quarter of the classrooms did these practices appear. Two items, however, are interesting. The substantial percentages of a mixed pattern that turn up under group instruction and classroom activities; and the number of classrooms that contained at least one learning center. I have already mentioned the problems accompanying any attempt to determine the spread among teachers of informal practices. These figures support the point that teachers were particular in what they chose to put into practice.

Given the limits to the data I presented, it would still be fair to say that open classrooms, at varying stages of development, dotted the school map of the city in these peak years of interest in informal classrooms. But these dots probably didn't add up to more than one teacher in four or five. What about high schools?

Regular and Alternative High Schools

Alternative schools were not simply the secondary counterpart to open classrooms, although there were similarities. The roots of alternative high schools differed somewhat from the sources of informal education. These roots were located in student protest against university programs, Vietnam, civil rights concerns, and a melange of issues that came together in the late 1960s like metal filings hugging a magnet. Protest filtered down to high schools. Growing disaffection with high school rules and behavior, bigness, conventional instruction, a lack of participation in decisions, and a curriculum viewed as alien to current youth concerns found expression in student boycotts, underground newspapers, drop-outs, and the establishment of private and public alternative schools.[54]

Figure 13. PATTERNS OF INSTRUCTION IN NEW YORK CITY ELEMENTARY CLASSROOMS, 1967-1975



Murray Road (Newton,Massachusetts) and New York's Harlem Prep opened their doors in 1967. Wilson Open Campus School (Mankato, Minnesota) began in 1968 and, a year later, Philadelphia's Parkway program sent students throughout the city to learn. At the height of the movement hundreds of secondary alternative schools had been created by 1972. But the mortality rate was high. Still, by 1975, public alternative secondary schools were a fact of life that most school systems accepted and, in a number of instances, nurtured.[55]

Schools without walls where the city is the classroom, store-front schools, mini-schools within larger conventional high schools, theme or magnet schools (e.g. arts, science,etc.)---all fall under the heading of alternative high schools. I do exclude vocational, continuation and other schools targeted on certain groups of students, most of which were established prior to 1965.

No easy generalization, then, can capture the diversity in these schools. A number of commonalities, however, existed.

- school as community
- teacher as advisor
- active rather than passive learning
- student participation in major decision-making
- needs and experiences of students incorporated into curriculum and instruction.[56]

Varying greatly, individual high schools stressed some of these themes more than others. Nonetheless, in size, climate, teachers advising students, and curricular decision-making--particularly in constructing elective courses--and ideological commitment, alternatives differed from regular high schools.[57]

What about instruction? With the individual student, active learning, and curricular choice paramount values in alternative schools, what teaching practices occurred? Most of the research on alternative high schools has concentrated upon issues of governance, curriculum, composition of student body, student-teacher relationships, organizational processes; very little attention has been paid to pedagogy.[58]

What little has been done stresses diversity in teaching methods. David Moore, for example, cites the range of practice that he observed and gathered from the limited research: teacher-directed, programmed instruction, to "relatively formless, collaborative investigations and activities." Discussion is the preferred teaching method, he notes. "Curiously," he writes, "lecturing happens more than one might imagine, but open talk is far more common." Frequent field trips, guest speakers, films, and group work are commonly used, according to Moore. Still "teachers often take the primary responsibility for designing and supplying materials for courses." His interviews with students uncovered that they wanted "instructors to assume that role." Moore notes that there may be less innovative teaching practice in of itself but the frequency and the mix of these practices "may be new in American education."[59]

Dan Duke visited and studied six alternative secondary schools. In instructional grouping he found mixed ability grouping in all six. Teachers used a variety of classroom groupings, with small group and independent study common to all but one of the schools. When he looked at teaching practices he found that half of the schools had special rooms set aside for students to work with tutors or individually. None, however, has "creative room arrangements," i.e. learning centers, chairs arranged to increase student exchanges,etc. One high school had team teaching and one used older students to tutor younger ones. For student evaluation, three schools used fixed scales that students were measured against; yet far more stress was reported to be on individual, non-competitive grading. In telling parents how students were doing in school, four alternative schools used portfolios of what students had produced and teacher-parent conferences. After reviewing the results and the history of instructional reform, Duke concluded that "contemporary alternative schools do not constitute a pedagogical revolution."[60]

In New York City, alternative schools became an official plank in Harvey Scribner's platform to improve the city's high schools. Scribner was in charge of over 100 academic and vocational high schools enrolling over 300,000 students in the early 1970s. The academic high schools were large by any standard. Most ranged from three to four thousand students with 175 to 215 teachers on the faculty. Among the smaller schools were the vocational ones which enrolled between 1500 to 2000 students; among the larger schools in 1971 were John Jay (Brooklyn) with 5600 students, Louis Brandeis (Manhattan) with nearly 6000 , and DeWitt Clinton (Bronx), the largest New York high school, with almost 7000 students—all male. Ethnic composition in the high schools (1971) was:

white	50.9%
Black	29.5
Puerto Rican	15.1
Oriental	1.4
Other	3.1

Daily attendance for academic high schools was 77% of the student body. Almost one of every three students read two or more years below grade level. Yet nearly eight out of ten graduates applied to either junior or four year colleges.[61]

The new Chancellor directed a massive operation. Yet even prior to Scribner's arrival, a number of privately-funded store-front schools, established through private efforts, aimed at salvaging able students who had been either pushed out or dropped out of regular high schools. The New York Urban Coalition and the Urban League, using funds raised from banks and corporations, established networks of these schools in low-income, minority areas of the city. As the grants ended, the private groups negotiated with the Board of Education to install them in the regular high schools as mini-schools. Such schools had 75-125 students with separate staffing and rooms in the main building or in churches and rented facilities nearby, such as Harambee Prep in Charles Evans Hughes High School (Manhattan), Wingate Prep in the school of the same name (Brooklyn), and Haaren High School, itself divided into fourteen semi-autonomous mini-schools.[62]

Under Scribner and his successor, these mini-schools and separate alternative schools spread throughout the system so that by 1975 there were eleven alternative schools enrolling 4000 students and 40 mini-schools in all five boroughs of the city with about 6500 students. In addition there were a number of alternative programs, located in schools and central offices, aimed at talented students. The Executive High School Internship program, Erasmus Hall's Institute of Music and Art, and Julia Richman High School's Talent Unlimited program are examples of such programs. By 1976, all of these alternatives including mini-schools enrolled almost 15,000 students or about 5% of all high school youth.[63]

The range of options, as mentioned earlier, was broad. Most mini-schools were last-ditch efforts to save students from dropping out, to recruit truants back to school and to upgrade marginally academic, but able, young men and women who found it difficult to adjust to regular high schools. Small classes of less than 25 students, with teachers who listen, make demands and didn't mind being called by their first names, street workers who would see students at home or at their job--these and other traits marked many of these mini-schools.[64]

The eleven alternative schools in 1976 included the City-As-School, the New York counterpart to Philadelphia's Parkway program, Harlem Prep, Middle College High School—linked to LaGuardia Community College—and Park East High School, a school initially founded by community groups.[65]

Evidence drawn from journalists who observed over a dozen classes at Wingate Prep, Harambee, George Washington Prep, and Lower East Side Prep suggest a range of teacher approaches well within the mainstream of conventional practice. While classes are smaller and less formal, teaching methods are familiar. A sampling:

- A wide-ranging discussion on the use of drugs, the new state law on punishing drug pushers, and the impact of peer cultures intensely engaged students,
- An English class reading a Dorothy Parker short story about a blind Black child spent part of the period moving around the class blind-folded prior to discussing the story,
- Students reading parts in a play written by a contemporary Black writer halted periodically for moments of intense discussion between the class and teacher,
- A history class that was a disaster. The teacher lectured, rambled, asked questions and plunged on with answers to her questions; students paid little attention, talked among themselves, ignored teacher warnings. Mercifully, the bell rings,
- A teacher wrote quadratic equations on the blackboard and students took notes silently,
- An astronomy lesson was interspersed with questions and answers on astrology and horoscopes. [66]

One reporter summed up his impressions of classroom teaching in mini-schools: "The classroom instruction and subject matter are not essentially different from what might be found in many conventional high schools." What was different in these alternatives was size of the school, informality in relations between teachers and students, and governance decisions that often involved students.[67]

In the conventional academic high schools, patterns of instruction were like those practiced in earlier generations. I located photographs and written descriptions of 33 teachers in 13 high schools between 1969-1975 Spare as the sample is, the convergence in teaching patterns is striking.

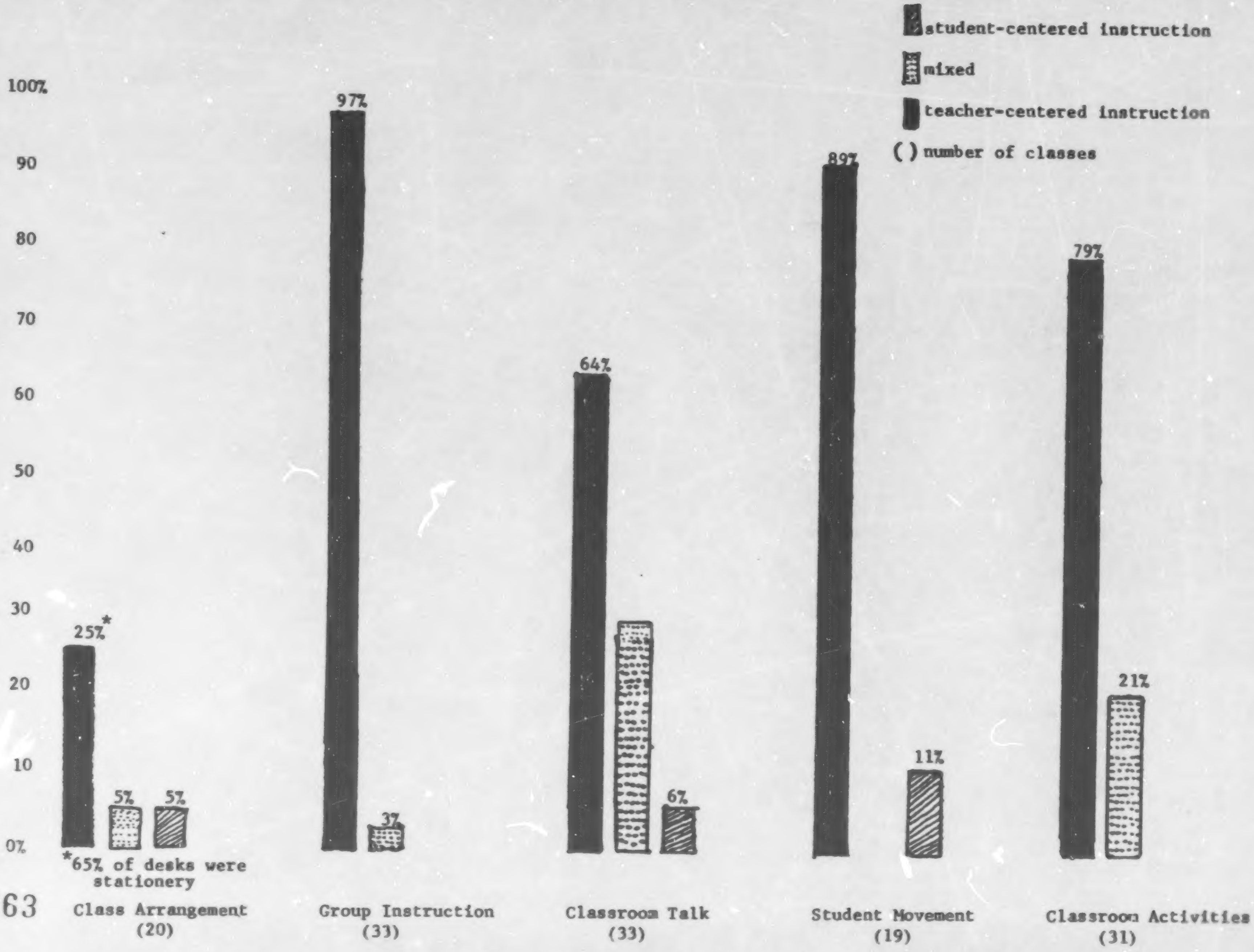
Teaching the entire class as a group almost always, the teacher talking almost two-thirds of the time, hardly any student movement within the room, and most class activities built around students listening, writing watching,etc.—this is teacher-centered instruction writ large.

Profiles of two high schools, including extensive classroom observations by New York Times reporters offer additional data to the 33 that I collected. Reporter William Stevens produced an in-depth article in 1971 on John Bowne High School (Queens), a school with a faculty of 200 for 3100 students, of whom 75% went to either a two- or four-year college. Ethnically, Bowne was 65% white and 30% Black, most of whom came as a result of a Board desegregation plan.[68]

Stevens sat in classrooms. He contrasted a radio electronics class taught by Physics teacher Norman Hessel, where students individually and enthusiastically built,radios, piece by piece, and a math class that gives any teacher a sweaty nightmare—students throwing spitballs at one another, playing cards, walking around the room, ignoring the teacher's directions. "This year," Stevens wrote, "Bowne has been preoccupied with how to create more situations like that in Hessel's class and change scenes like those in the mathematics class."[69]

Bowne had nearly 500 classes a day in about 75 different subjects. The day was sliced up into nine forty-minute periods. Solid discussions get going, teachers reported, and the bell cuts them off. While the scheduling of time affects instruction, teachers also pointed out to Stevens that "traditional teaching approaches" drive students into boredom. "If we were ever to teach sex the way we teach other things, " one teacher remarked, "it would go out of style." And Stevens, after sitting in a number of classes, said that "the teacher is at the front of the class attempting to interest everyone in the same subject at the same time."

Figure 14. PATTERNS OF INSTRUCTION IN NEW YORK CITY HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOMS, 1965-1975



Hard as that is to do, teachers continued to do it. The social studies department chairman told Stevens that each lesson is supposed to have a specific objective and the sort of questions that provoke students to think, to spark students into participating in classroom discussions. One teacher in that department said that if he had one-third of his class participating, he judged the lesson a success.[70]

Efforts to individualize instruction through independent study and small groups were underway, according to principal Roxee Joly; "our success has been minimal, but not zero." Many teachers, Stevens said, still believe that "a quiet classroom is by definition good."[71]

William Stevens also spent a week shadowing a Harlem ninth grader who attended John F. Kennedy (Bronx), a new (1972) eight-story high school with 1800 freshmen and sophomores that would grow in enrollment to almost 5000 as it absorbed more grades. Fifteen year old Natalie Wright was part of the 40% of the school that was Black. The rest of the school was roughly divided between white and Hispanic students. Stevens' comments and Natalie's observations of her academic classes follow:

.Introductory Physical Science. The science teacher paired off students to work on a second run-through of an experiment on the conservation of mass. They heated sealed test tubes of copper and sulphur, weighed, and recorded it. They spent two days on the experiment because the teacher was trying to get the class to graph the results. "Very boring to Natalie." Stevens wrote, because she had learned conservation of mass in junior high school.

.Algebra. "Happy class." Natalie worked on polynominal multiplication problems all period as the teacher circulated through the class helping individual students. After Natalie finished, she began helping other students. "I just like it," she replied to Stevens' question about her interest in Algebra.

.Social studies. Natalie is bored on Monday. She couldn't care less about ancient China's civil service system or their scholar-gentry class. On Wednesday, students and teacher got into a lively discussion of civil service, social status, and class mobility.

.Spanish. Natalie had failed class in first nine weeks. Teachers were switched. The lesson on Monday was based upon a story of a meeting between a tourist and hotel clerk. Using a "Peanuts" cartoon, the teacher asked questions in Spanish and the class chorused replies.

.Creative Writing. Teacher introduced onomatopoeta. Question and answers exchanges occurred after teacher explanation. When teacher asked for examples, class exploded with a "cacaphony of bangs, meows, buzzes, bow-wows, swishes, jingles, moos, oinks.... Much hilarity."

."2:45 P.M. Bell. Liberation."

Stevens summarized two entire days of classes with the laconic: "Tuesday was the same as yesterday," or "classes were the same."[72]

Except for science where laboratory work had Natalie and a classmate paired off, the other four classes were taught as a whole group. Discussion or a mild form of recitation were the primary means of exchanging information. Seatwork took up one entire period. Little student movement was apparent, except for science. Each lesson was structured, directed, and moved along by the teacher who covered the content. Teaching through a textbook was common. As another J.F. Kennedy teacher put it a few years later, "I have always felt that the best teaching machine is a book."[73]

Stevens' narrative of two high schools overlap the 33 descriptions I gathered. Teacher-centered patterns of instruction dominated both conventional and mini-school classes with some variations in degree and frequency of particular practices being evident.

About the same time that Steven's account appeared, Scribner had announced his resignation. Within a year Irving Anker, a New York City educator of thirty-eight years service who had risen through the ranks as most of his predecessors, assumed the Chancellorship. Improving test scores and accountability were the new buzz words circulating among insiders in the mid-1970s. Automatic promotions were abolished. Tougher standards for reading performance were instituted before promotion to a higher grade would be permitted. Open classrooms were no longer a hot topic. With the onset of severe budget cuts in 1975, survival replaced talk about reform.[74]

The fiscal emergency that jolted New York like a dash of cold water drove public officials to cut back severely all government agencies, but especially, the public schools. Teacher lay-offs crippled programs. An Open Corridor school (P.S. 84) had 26 of 52 teachers pink-slipped. The ripple effects of layoffs shipped teachers with more seniority to vacancies in schools where teachers with less years in the system, many of whom were Black and Hispanic, had been fired. Massive staff dislocation aborted many infant efforts at opening up classrooms. Class size ballooned beyond the contractual limits of 32 and 34 students in elementary and secondary schools, respectively. Aides were let go. Counselors and special teachers were cut. Larger classes and less help added up to further plunges in teacher morale. Not exactly the kind of climate that nourished teacher initiative, risk-taking, putting out extra effort, or a spirit of innovation.[75]

Yet in 1981, P.S. 84 and a number of other elementary schools, with a decade of history in Open Corridors and informal education, still retained those classrooms. While the numbers of teachers and principals appear to be fewer than a decade ago, that such efforts survived, indeed, flourished in an indifferent, if not hostile, environment is a testimonial to the tenacity of teachers and administrators.

At the secondary level, alternative high schools and mini-schools, also hit hard by retrenchment, survived quite well. In 1979, 11 alternative high schools enrolling almost 5000 students were still operating, excluding many students enrolled in mini-schools lodged in senior highs(e. g. Seward Park High School, James Monroe High School, Haaren High School).[76]

Turn now to Washington,D.C. in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Veteran school-watchers had never seen a year like 1967. In April, teachers voted 3-2 to have the American Federation of Teachers represent them at the bargaining table. Teacher unions had arrived in a non-union town. In June, for the first time in the history of the District schools judicial appointments created a Board of Education with a majority of Black members, most of whom actively opposed the policies of Carl Hansen, school chief for nine years. Later in the same month, a year-long, quarter-million dollar study by Teachers College of the entire school system was released. The study severely criticized the Superintendent's policies, the largely ineffective and inappropriate instructional program,and called for an end to the four-track system of grouping students.

The very same day, federal Judge J. Skelly Wright rendered a 183-page decision in the Hobson v. Hansen suit. He ordered an end to the track system, the busing of Black children from overcrowded schools to near-empty white schools west of Rock Creek Park, and faculty integration. Within two weeks, the Board decided not to appeal the Wright decision and asked the Superintendent to implement the court order. Instead, Carl Hansen, father of the Amidon Plan, a tightly-structured program that placed the teacher at the center of instruction, and the Four-Track system, resigned. Indeed, the events of 1967 shook the D.C. system by the scruff of the neck, unnerving the organization profoundly in the decade that followed.[77]

One benchmark of the subsequent instability is increased superintendent turnover. For almost a half-century (1920-1967), four superintendents served the District: Frank Ballou, Robert Haycock, Hobart Corning, and Carl Hansen. Yet in just over a decade (1968-1980), six school chiefs moved in and out of the large twelfth floor office in the downtown Presidential Building.

Demography, court decisions, and political change explain the turmoil at the top. The school system had grown from over 90,000 students in 1940 to 150,000 in 1967, of whom more than 90% were Black. Almost 8000 teachers worked in nearly 140 schools(1967). Washington was the largest predominately Black school system in the nation. Although the *Bolling v. Sharpe* decision, the District's counterpart to *Brown v. Board of Education* required desegregation of schools in 1955 when nearly two of three children were Black, whites continued to leave the school system as they had been doing since World War II. As these white students were replaced by newcomers from the South, desegregation generated much attention from the media and civic groups for its symbolic value but a decade after the *Bolling* there were only 15,000 white children in a school system of 150,000 students, most of whom were caught in a web of poverty. By 1967, other concerns shoved aside desegregation as an issue.[78]

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, educating Black children to perform well slowly replaced desegregation as the fundamental issue facing the schools. But the goal's clarity and its pursuit often went astray after 1968 when Congress, in the backwash of widescale rioting triggered by the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., passed a series of laws that gave pieces of home rule to the District government. In addition, the goal got muddied in the intense efforts of administrators to comply with the judicial decree of the *Hobson v. Hansen* decision that mandated the transfers of teachers in the middle of the school year to permit equitable allocation of resources to all schools. Such massive transfers of teachers disrupted school programs for the rest of the school year.[79]

Electoral politics came to D.C. initially with an elected Board of Education in 1968; anything connected with schools became contested items. The new Board's search for a superintendent to replace Hansen produced William Manning from Lansing, Michigan. He lasted less than two years. His successor, a Detroit administrator, became the first Black to head a big-city school system in the nation. Hugh Scott appointed in 1970, came just at the time that the School Board independently had arranged with Kenneth Clark, urban schools' critic, psychologist, and member of the New York state Board of Regents, to put into the schools his program design to improve District education. The Clark Plan, an effort that focused the school system's energies on the teaching of reading and improving academic achievement, was handed to Scott to implement. The plan met stiff resistance from the teachers' union because of testing requirements and less-than-subtle hints by school officials that teachers might be evaluated on the basis of test results. Constant bickering between school board members, union threats to strike, and bureaucratic foul-ups over executing the Wright decree buried the plan by 1972 and Scott exited less than a year later.[80]

Scott lasted less than three years. His successor, a Chicago school administrator, believed deeply in active citizen participation in the governance and operation of schools, the empowerment of Black people, and the positive benefits of conflict. Barbara Sizemore had the two-fold distinction of being the first female superintendent of the District and the first superintendent fired after a public hearing of the Board of Education. Sizemore had been superintendent two years.

The swinging-door superintendency halted with Vincent Reed's appointment in 1975. An insider who had risen through the ranks, served as a high school principal, and had been a top lieutenant of the three superintendents who followed Hansen, Reed re-established managerial order to a system that was in profound organizational disarray after the whiplashing of entering and exiting administrators. In 1976, he launched a comprehensive program called the Competency-Based Curriculum(CBC). A massive staff development program that trained thousands of staff members how to set lesson objectives, devise instructional strategies to achieve objectives, and assess results of classroom instruction during the year. In-service sessions, three-pound manuals of directions distributed to the instructional staff, elaborate explanations to the public, tactics to boost staff morale were various strategies pursued in implementing CBC. A slim majority of the Board approved Reed's direction, including the end of social promotion and the setting of minimal levels of competency that students had to demonstrate before they could be promoted. In 1980, after a number of public displays of superintendent-board friction and a deep split in the Board over Reed's plans to create a high school for the gifted and other issues, the Superintendent took an early retirement.[81]

This brief summary of organizational instability at the top between 1967-1980 sets the stage for examining what occurred within schools amid turbulent Board-Superintendent politics and the inevitable confusion of green and red signals given to principals and teachers on where to go and when to stop. A snapshot of where the entire system was in 1966-1967 at the onset of this period of turmoil comes from the Teachers College study called the Passow Report, after Study Director A. Harry Passow who, with nearly two hundred staff members, conducted the year-long survey.[82]

After two decades under Carl Hansen and Frank Ballou's immediate successors, Passow found the schools in need of fundamental changes if Washington was to create a "Model Urban School System"--the formal title of the study. The shortcomings of the system documented in the 593-page study gave little comfort to Hansen or his supporters when they read it.

> .a low-level of scholastic achievement....
>
> .grouping procedures which have been honored in the breach as often as observed in practice....

- .a curriculum which, with certain exceptions, has not been especially developed for or adapted to an urban population....
- .a central administrative organization which combined overconcentration of responsibilities in some areas and proliferation and overlap in others....

Nor did any of the conclusions on the instructional program throw bouquets at school officials.[83]

Teachers were "inadequately prepared." Pressures to staff classrooms "at all costs" have led the school board to hire hundreds of temporary teachers over the years. "The presence of so many ill-qualified teachers," Passow concluded, "no doubt accounts for the many teachers who, according to classroom observers, are ritualistic, superficial in presenting subject matter, and fearful of the normal activities of teachers."[84]

Curriculum was narrow. Schools "stripped subjects to their most formal and least meaningful aspects." In teaching reading the narrowness reached its peak in a program that "construed reading as word-recognition and word recognition as phonics, thus turning reading into a program of ritual code-breaking...." Other elementary school subjects "are either given short shrift or detoured into further exercises in reading." Yet test results show "not enough children do, in fact, learn to read well."[85]

Tracking was ineffective. After reviewing student achievement, the numbers of elementary and secondary students that were in the different tracks, what movement occurred between tracks, the task force studying tracking concluded that "there are sufficient inequities, inconsistencies, and inadequacies to warrant its abandonement."[86]

And classroom teaching? Twenty-three experienced teachers and administrators trained in observing classrooms visited 75 teachers in nine elementary schools selected at random."The clock seemed to be in charge of the classroom," one observer wrote. Daily schedules set who did what, when, and under what conditions. Lessons--consistent with the Curriculum Bulletin on the Amidon Plan--were similar from one classroom to another. There was little evidence of teachers departing from the spirit of the Plan or daily schedule."The striking characteristics of these classrooms," observers reported, "was the quiet and orderliness.... The children seem compliant, obedient,and passive." Time was spent mostly on "drill and reading and phonics,on reading for social studies information, and on working arithmetic problems."

> The general conclusion to be drawn from these observations is that ... the teachers in Washington have been led ... to place themselves ... in a highly directive role.... the child spent most of his day paying the closest possible attention to his teacher, following her directions, responding to her questions, obeying her rules. The children were not encouraged to talk to one another, either formally or informally.... 87

At the high school, observations were limited and offered even less comfort to either teachers or administrators.

> ---Science: "In the main, the teachers lecture and the students listen. There was minimal pupil-teacher or pupil-pupil interaction."
>
> ---Social studies: "In most classrooms, instruction seems to follow a textbook approach...."
>
> ---Foreign language: "Their training for the textbooks, instructional resources, and the direct method ... needs ... massive upgrading.
>
> ---Mathematics: "...teachers observed seemed either uncomfortable with the material they were teaching or oblivious to its nuances and implications.Mathematics errors or misconceptions occurred frequently.... Continued organization of large mathematics classes conducted by inept teachers is a questionable policy." 88

The Passow Study portrayed teaching practices in 1966-1967 at both elementary and secondary levels as mostly teacher-centered. The study also referred to some promising classroom innovations that were underway in individual schools and programs. In the turbulent years following Hansen's resignation and the dismantling of the Amidon Plan and Four

Track system, just at the time when informal education was at the peak of public and professional interest, opportunities surfaced to expand these infant efforts to reform classroom practices. The Model School Division is a case in point.

Model School Division

Located in the Cardozo section of the city, an area labeled for years as a slum by newspapers and reformers, by 1969, the Model School Division had been established as a decentralized unit enrolling 19,500 students in five pre-schools and 18 elementary and secondary schools, including Cardozo High.[89]

Between 1964-1975, MSD was a holding company for almost every single innovation that promised improvement for urban poor and minority students. Established to be an experimental arm for the entire school system, by 1970 when a program inventory was taken, over two dozen curricular, instructional, and organizational innovations had been installed (e.g. elementary science series, English in Every Classroom, Madison Math Project, team teaching, nongraded primaries, Language Experience in Reading). Federal, private, and local funds mixed to produce a feisty climate resonating with optimism and change in the Cardozo area. With the departure of Carl Hansen, reluctant parent of the decentralized venture, the MSD had even more discretion to innovate.

One showcase effort that brought much publicity while earning the respect of many educators, both locally and nationally, was the Innovation Team. Composed of fifteen experienced classroom teachers, the team began operating in 1967 under the direction of Mary Lela Sherburne, who had worked with the Education Development Center in Newton, (Mass.). Its initial task was to begin coordinating the myriad programs that kept spinning out of federal and local reformers' heads and wallets. Beyond coordination, the Team was to help classroom teachers incorporate new ideas and materials into their daily practice. That was in 1967.

By 1969, when a formal evaluation of the Team was completed, the objectives had shifted from conventional inservice training and technical assistance for teachers toward changing their roles, making classrooms more active "where different learning styles, interests, and paces can be accomodated through a variety of materials and techniques, involving teachers in schoolwide cooperative problem-solving and decision-making." The Team, underwritten, in part, by EDC, had held scores of workshops, visited hundreds of classrooms numerous times--at the request of teachers, and provisioned rooms with new math, science, social studies, and reading materials. In a small, but growing number of MSD classrooms, science and math centers began to appear.[90]

While much of the vocabulary used by Team members, the Director, and Assistant Superintendent was consistent with the language of informal education advocates, seldom was there a reference to open classrooms in the MSD. Materials from EDC, using tri-wall cardboard to construct learning centers and carrels, and expanding the teacher's view of the classroom as a place where children actively learn were all part of the approach conveyed by the Innovation Team. Part of the reason may have been that the philosophy of the team evolved in that direction between 1967-1970 and was stated explicitly in the latter year. The convergence of the Team's beliefs in active learning and the teacher's central role as primary decision-maker with the direction of informal education, however, did not produce large numbers of classrooms packaged and labeled "open" in the MSD. Some existed. More were in the process of developing by 1970. But the thrust of the Innovation Team was not to xerox open classrooms.They were to listen and respond to teacher's requests for help. And teachers in the MSD endorsed the Team's work, indicating in surveys that the fifteen teachers "had contributed to their effectiveness as teachers more than any other source or MSD program."[91]

In 1969 when Russell Cort completed his evaluation of the Team he said that "improving performance at the school and classroom levels will take continuous, dedicated, persistent, focussed effort." Within a year, the Innovation Team disbanded.[92]

A new Superintendent, Hugh Scott, stuck with implementing Kenneth Clark's design for academic improvement, saw other uses for the Team; less outside funding produced shortages that the District budget could not absorb; and changes in Team membership help explain the abolition of the Innovation Team. In just over three years, the Team had assembled, worked with teachers, and had been dispersed. The promise of planned changed embedded in the Team slipped away.

Innovation Team members moved on to principalships, central office posts, and some left the system. Mary Lela Sherburne, first director of the Team, and member Olive Covington helped organize the Advisory and Learning Exchange (ALE), a privately-funded group of educators interested in establishing and spreading open classrooms in the Washington metropolitan area. Created as a teacher center and support group for those private and public school parents and educators seeking to explore open education and similar approaches, ALE opened its doors in a downtown Washington suite of offices in 1971. By 1974, over 600 workshops had attracted teachers and parents from the D.C. area. By 1981, however, the organization had undergone many changes and support of informal classrooms was no longer its main interest.[93]

Open Classrooms and Open Space

Elsewhere in the city, open classrooms appeared in the early 1970s. Sometimes promoted by groups of white parents—as in New York City; sometimes installed by eager teachers. In the far Northwest of the city, for example, at Hearst-Eaton schools, Joan Brown,a new principal(1971) and former Innovation Team member, recruited new teachers enthusiastic for informal education and expected the ones she inherited to open up their classrooms. A summer workshop in 1970 trained twenty teachers to start open classrooms in twelve schools west of Rock Creek Park, a predominately white, affluent area. Parents from schools in the area lobbied school officials for the program. The summer workshop was led by Innovation Team members LaVerne Ford, Mary Alexander, and others.[94]

The Morgan School, the first parent-controlled school in the District, began with open classrooms in 1967 under the aegis of Antioch College. Young teachers,mostly white, and community aides, mostly Black, trained to use instructional materials from EDC, divided the school into teams of children by age rather than grades, and embraced informal education. By 1969, the first principal, Ken Haskins had left and Bishop Reed, head of the Morgan Community School Board, had died. By that time, Antioch College had severed its ties with the school. The few white parents who helped establish the school and negotiated the contract with the Board of Education that gave Morgan its autonomy—had also left. A new local Board and principal set specific rules for student conduct, brought back report cards, tested students, and told teachers to stress basic skills and discipline.[95]

By 1970, most of the original teachers and open classrooms had been pushed out of the school. The principal recruited teachers from southern Black colleges to replace the ones that had left. In 1971, seventeen of thirty teachers in the school were teaching for the first time. When a newspaper reporter visited the school in 1973, six years after it began as a community-controlled school, only two of the primary teachers still maintained informal classroom. Most teachers "ran their classrooms along highly traditional lines and say they are appalled by what they regard as the disorganization and lack of discipline in the classes of some teachers at Morgan." Yet those few open classroom teachers in the school looked forward to the replacement of the old Morgan school with a new open space building in 1974.[96]

Putting up open space buildings, like many efforts in the District requiring money, took much time in aligning properly the Board of Education, District government, and both Houses of Congress in authorizing and then appropriating the necessary funds. As Frank Ballou found out in 1925 when his first building program was finally approved by all the necessary agencies, patience, a sense of the absurd, and a rabbit's foot helped. Often requests submitted in one year would take up to seven years to appear in a document authorizing the Board of Education to proceed with architectural plans already outdated. So it was with the replacement of old, space-poor elementary buildings erected before and during Superintendent Frank Ballou's tenure.

Open space concepts had seized the imagination of school boards and superintendents across the country in the early 1960s. The District was no exception. Requests for open space were submitted and, after lengthy delays, were approved. By the mid-1970s open space schools appeared at both the elementary and secondary levels (e.g. plans for replacing the old Brookland elementary were approved in 1967; the open space school was finally dedicated in 1974; a similar span of time marked the erection of the open space Dunbar High School).

Open space, as an environment, encourages teaming among teachers, varied groupings of children, nongraded arrangments, and diverse uses of space. It is consistent with, but not essential for, open classrooms. Beginning in 1971 when the Ketcham addition opened, each year brought new open space schools until by 1979 there were 17, costing $163 million, including the new Morgan school which had been renamed Marie Reed.[97]

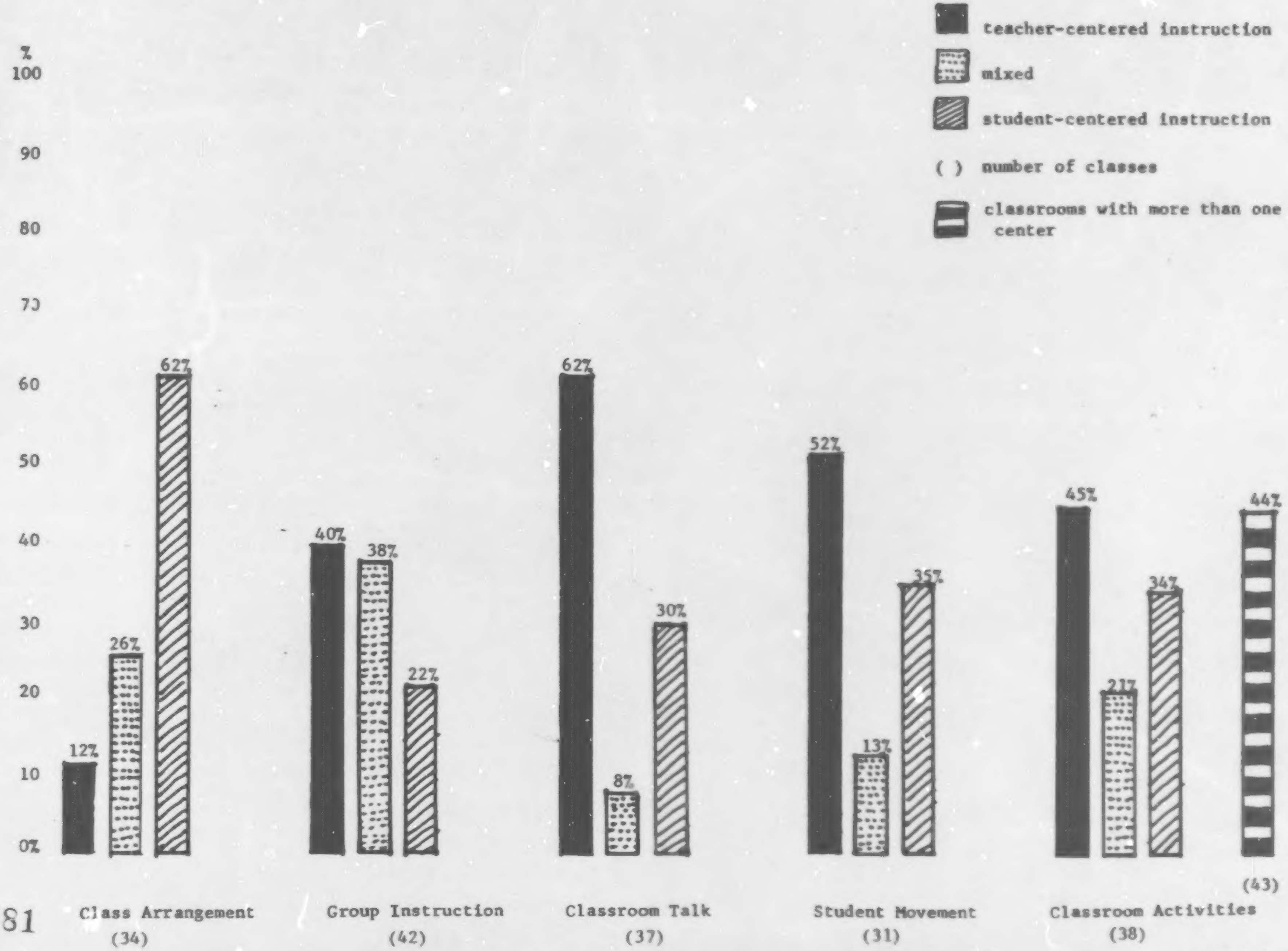
In the District, however, open space was wedded to open classrooms. Between 1971-1974, inservice workshops for teachers who volunteered to work in open space were held. Six training cycles were sponsored by a federally-funded Training Center for Open Space Schools. Few doubted that the British primary school, Lillian Weber's Open Corridors, and informal classrooms, in general, were the models that D.C. school officials had in mind. And it was pursued seriously. By that I mean that some principals, supervisors, middle-level managers who shared a passion for open classrooms sought improved ways of training teachers who had volunteered for the new buildings. But no Board of Education or any Superintendent since Hansen's departure made a public commitment to informal education.[98]

Consider Brookland School. Two years before the new school opened, the principal and members of the six-teacher staff of the "old" school attended workshops, visited open space schools in the Washington area, took courses at D.C. Teachers College, and spent two weeks touring British schools at their own expense. The staff gave workshops to parents explaining open classrooms in open space. The new school opened in 1974 and was subsequently identified as the model open space school for the District schools.[99]

How widespread were open classrooms, even broadly defined, in Washington is difficult to estimate. As in New York City no survey was undertaken after the Passow Report. With 130 elementary schools staffed by nearly 3500 teachers (1975), signs of diffusion are, at best, blurred. Less than 15% of the schools were open space. I would be foolish to assume either that all teachers in open space conducted open classrooms or that open classrooms were located only in open space. There are some clues, nonetheless.

By 1974, in the last training cycle for 200 teachers electing to teach in open space, 28% reported they had opened up their classrooms. For over half of the teachers attending the workshop it was their first experience with informal classrooms. The AIE reported in 1975-1976 that over 700 D.C. elementary teachers had attended workshops.There was no indication that the number was cumulative or represented individual teachers. Also consider the 46 classroom descriptions from twenty-three elementary schools that I gathered from photos, newspaper articles, published interviews with teachers and an evaluation report. Note, however, that the percentages for student-centered instruction are probably inflated since, for example, of the ten schools that had learning centers, two--Morgan and Hearst-Eaton, appeared in the narrative. These two schools accounted for almost half of the classrooms that had one or more centers.[100] A student-centered pattern is strongest in furniture arrangement (62%), learning centers (44%), and students moving around the classroom without asking the teacher's permission (35%). However, when it comes to small groups and individual activities, student participation in classroom tasks and prevalence of student talk the range goes from 22% to 34%--again with the caution that these figures may be somewhat higher because of the small number of schools and two schools contributing more accounts than others. Teacher-centered patterns still registered highly; almost half of the classrooms were taught through whole group instruction (40%) and engaged in listening, working at desks,

Figure 15. PATTERNS OF INSTRUCTION IN WASHINGTON ELEMENTARY CLASSROOMS, 1967-1976



and responding to teacher questions(45%). In over half of the classes, there was little student movement (52%) and in nearly two of every three of these classes, teachers dominated verbal exchanges in classrooms(62%).

What all of these scattered figures provide is a splintered, but nonetheless considered, basis for an estimate of one in four or five D.C. elementary teachers doing something in their classroom that could be defined as open.[101]

By 1975, interest in open education flagged considerably. Federal funds for the training Center had run out. City deficits produced lists of budget cuts and protracted squabbles occurred between the Board of Education and Mayor over which agencies would bear what portions of the budget cuts. The schools retrenched by cutting aides, staff development, and other services that had nurtured open education. By 1978, a small study that compared reading achievement and and other student outcomes in 372 open space and self-contained classrooms found that "the self-contained classroom provided a better learning environment than has the open space classroom." The last nail was pounded home.[102]

More important, however, was the growing concentration on improving basic skills and constant monitoring of progress by tests through initially, the Clark Plan (1970-1973) and, later, the Competency-Based Curriculum under Reed after 1976. Teachers were charged to provide specific and direct instruction in these skills; teachers had to know whether or not students had performed at the appropriate level each day. Testing expanded. Standards for biannual promotions were both tightened and enforced. For children retained, remedial programs expanded. While open classrooms are not necessarily incompatible with such measures, this direction is far closer in spirit to the Amidon Plan, abolished in 1967, than the child-centered classroom. Many veteran teachers found the structured, teacher-centered approaches called for in the Clark Plan and CBC quite similar to the approach favored by Hansen years before.

The stress upon academic skills through CBC, the reduction of tangible support for open education, and the inherently greater demands that accompany informal teaching may explain the difficulties that principals had, after 1976, in securing volunteers to staff open space classrooms. The jerry-built walls of portable blackboards and book cases that teachers—some of whom were assigned to vacancies in open space schools to replace their less-senior colleagues--threw up around students in of effort to create self-contained rooms within open space may also be explained by the concentration upon academic skills. Learning centers were used less and less.[103]

In 1981-1982 I spent two mornings at Bruce-Monroe and Brookland, open space schools. Bruce-Monroe, with 525 pupils and 20 staff had a principal who had worked with the Innovation Team. The new facility had opened in 1974. At that time, centers on reading, math, science,social studies, etc. dotted each "Learning Community" of three to four teachers, being used often in the course of daily instruction. In 1981, when I walked through the pods I saw a number of centers but they were used sporadically by teachers, usually for practice activities after formal periods on reading,math, and language arts were completed. Aides were no longer present. Special teachers did pull students out of classes for specific instruction.[104]

Of the seven teachers I observed (14 on staff for grades 1-6) only one had children sitting in rows of chairs facing the chalkboard; the six teachers had students sitting at tables facing one another. Children moved freely as they worked on tasks, asked the teachers questions, etc. Four of the teachers were working with the class as one group; the rest used a mixture of small and large groupings within the two hours I moved in and out of their pods called "Learning Communities." Four of the teachers had on the chalkboards the CBC objective for the day:

. "Circle the beginning sounds."

. "Add and subtract."

. "Review plural endings."

. "Using contractions"

For classroom activities, five teachers gave directions to students and the students worked at their desks from thirty to forty-five minutes on the same task, i.e. textbook questions, copying from the blackboard,etc. One teacher had the whole class sitting in front of her. She asked questions on math problems of the students, who had texts in their laps, and answered her questions. One teacher had divided her class into at least three groups that worked on different tasks.

Six of the seven teachers had learning centers. They were not used daily. Teachers told me that they were used occasionally as rewards or practice for CBC objectives when scheduled activities were completed.

Also opened in 1974, Brookland had 450 students in kindergarten through eighth grade. Large open spaces with few dividers made up the "Learning Centers" as the grades were called. As with Bruce-Monroe, aides had been cut. Teacher reductions had brought new staff to the school while sending others elsewhere. Art, music,and home economics teachers provided instruction for all grades. Only one classroom center was visible in the entire school the morning I visited.

Of the nine teachers in grades 1-6, I spent two hours with six of them.

Most teachers had their students sitting at round tables, facing one another. Children moved at will in the classroom space. Five of the teachers worked with one group while the rest of the class sat at their tables doing assignments out of texts. One teacher had two groups working on different tasks. In four of the six classrooms where teacher-student exchanges occurred for more than ten minutes, the exchanges were in the teacher question-student answer format with the questions drawn directly from the text or worksheet. On the walls of every classroom were charts listing CBC skills in reading, thinking skills, math, language arts, etc. Also charts with students' names showing tasks that were completed hung in five of the six classrooms.

Were these classrooms in the two schools open? The space was open. The artifacts were there: centers, flexible furniture arrangment use of space, freedom of student movement. Yet teacher direction and centrality were obvious in steering who did what, when, how, and with whom. Student participation was limited to tasks assigned by the teachers. These mixed behaviors resemble closely what an earlier generation of teachers had created which I labeled a hybrid, a teacher-centered progressivism.[105]

If informal classrooms, at different levels of development, emerged in elementary schools after 1967, what happened in District high schools in those years?

High School Classrooms

As in New York City and elsewhere in the country, the late 1960s saw university students protest against their institution's policies and actions spill over onto high schools. Washington shared the same experience with Howard University except that initially, student protests pursued racial issues, especially after the conflagration triggered by the assassination of Martin Luther King in 1968. Development of racial consciousness was the basis of the first public alternative school in the District.[106]

Freedom Annex grew out of the work of a small cadre of Eastern High School students who were dissatisfied with the quality of schooling they received. They designed the alternative school, raised money for it, chose the courses and selected the teachers. Billed as one of the few student-run high schools in the nation, Freedom Annex was supported by George Rhodes, assistant superintendent of secondary schools and approved by the Board of Education but no public funds were allocated. Funding came from foundations and other private sources.

Over a hundred students took required courses in the morning at Eastern High school and spent the rest of the school day at a nearby church where they heard lectures and participated in discussion on Black history, Black literature, Swahili, Black art and drama, and community organization.[107]

Two years later, with less than thirty students enrolled, private and foundation grants spent, the school closed its door and boarded up its windows. Eastern High School, with a new principal, had modified its curriculum, instituted a number of changes and the student leaders who created Freedom Annex had graduated.[108]

An advocate for choices, George Rhodes had been laying the groundwork for other alternative programs sponsored and funded by the School Board since the Freedom School made local headlines. In 1970, Washington's version of Philadelphia's Parkway Program, New York's City-As-School, and Chicago's Metro Program accepted its first students. Called the School-Without-Walls, tenth graders from across the city applied for admission. In addition, Rhodes and his assistants encouraged a group of secondary teachers and administrators to establish mini-schools in five junior high schools. A Literary Arts and Journal Program, where students would spend afternoons producing a city-wide creative arts journal, was established also. No mini-schools, however, were developed at any of the eleven high schools.[109]

As in other cities, there were privately-funded alternative schools outside the aegis of the public schools such as the Urban League's Street Academy, D.C. Street Academy, Rap Inc., and other ventures that tried to reduce actual and potential dropouts from District high schools and redirect students into resuming their schooling beyond high school. The School Board did not, as the New York Board of Education had done, incorporate these programs into the alternative school framework that began to evolve in the early 1970s.[110]

By 1981, the School-Without-Walls, the Literary Arts Program, the Lemuel Penn Career Center, the Duke Ellington School of Performing Arts, and the newly-established Banneker High School for the Gifted constituted the alternative high school program. Issues of governance, size and instruction were seemingly subordinated to developing choices for students.

I found no evidence that classroom instruction in alternative schools differed from the range of practices in regular high schools. Class size was smaller. Individual help from teachers was available. Informal relations between teachers and students in the smaller programs did exist. The frequency of small groups and independent work was probably higher in the programs where specific crafts and skills were taught.[111]

In regular high schools, the picture that emerges from the following bar graph based upon 86 classrooms (1967-1976) is acutely familiar.

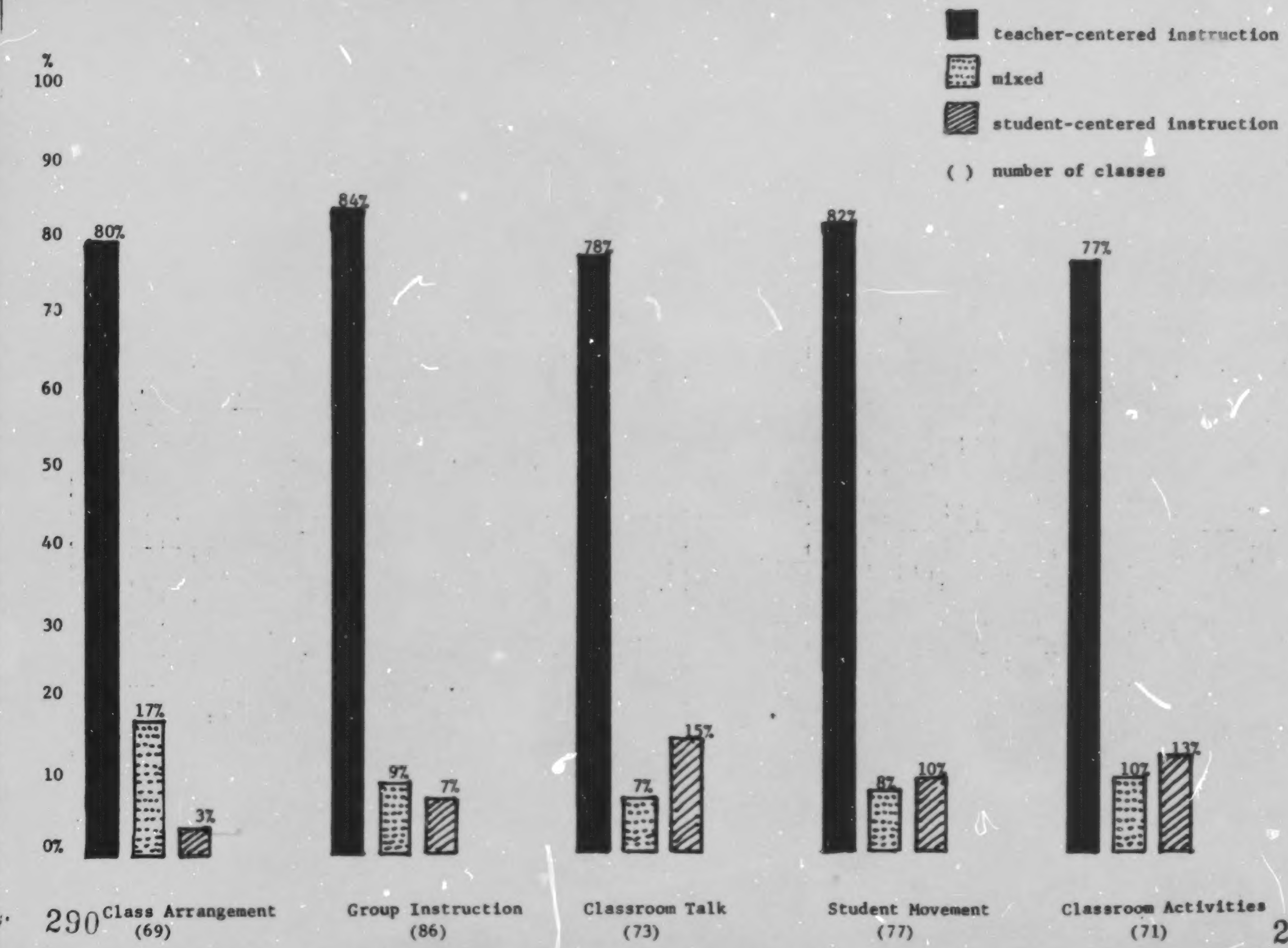
As in New York City, the percentages in each category for teacher-centered patterns shout their uniformity for 10 of the 12 high schools from which these descriptions were drawn. Nearly eight out of every ten high school teachers described in these accounts or caught in photos taught in a stunningly similar fashion. So stunningly, that on a meter of student participation, the needle would have barely moved off zero.

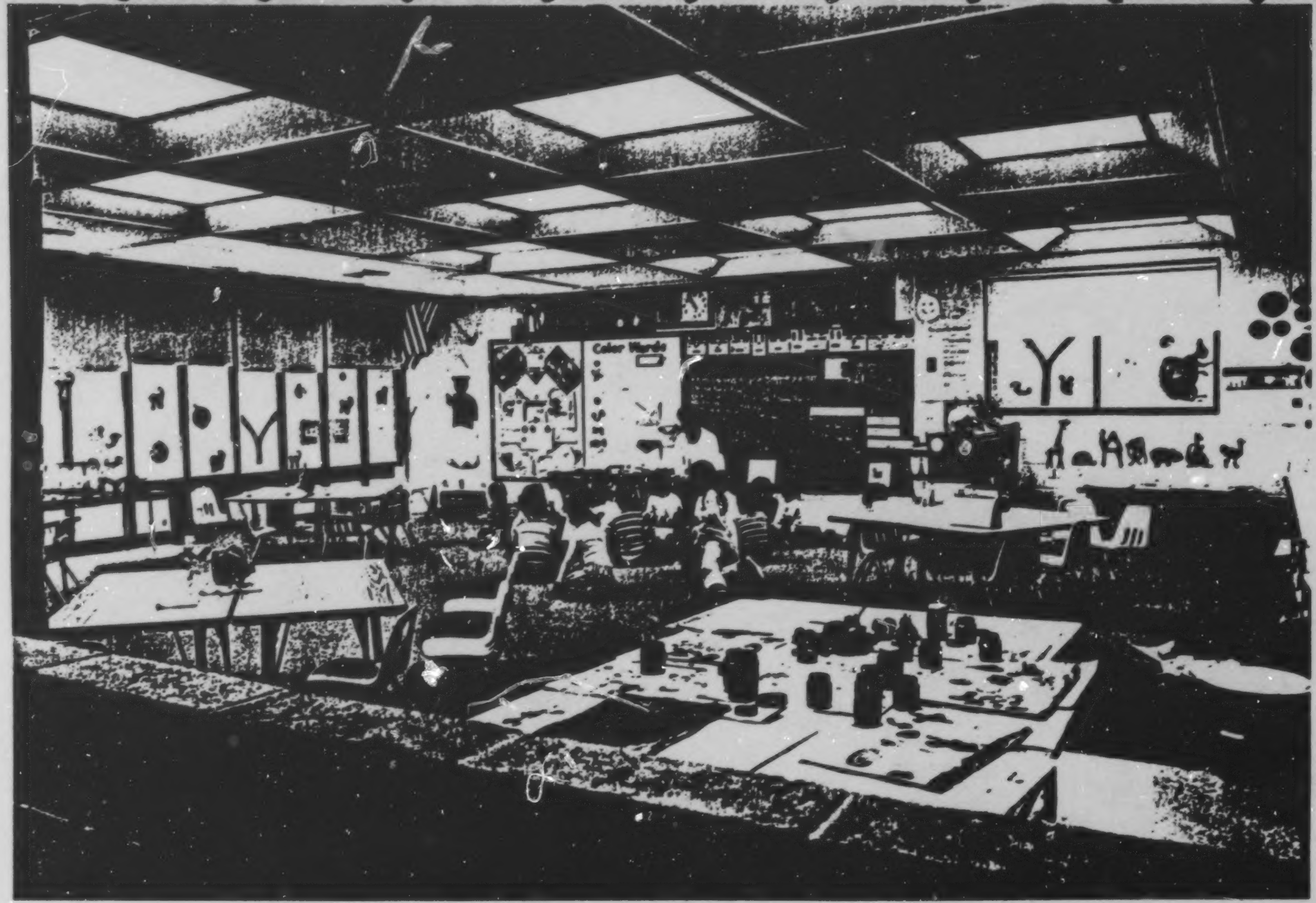
Nothing here contradicts my experience as a social studies teacher and team leader in a teacher-training program for three years (1967-1968 and 1970-1972) at Roosevelt High School. My duties as team leader for groups of interns in the building brought me in contact with many teachers, especially in the English and social studies departments, who I observed briefly and informally. The patterns reported here for high schools elsewhere in the District were similar to what I observed: whole group instruction, little student movement, discussions and informal recitations, assigned seatwork, students at blackboards, occasional student reports and panels,etc. The textbook, chalkboard, durable vocal chords, and a pair of strong legs were the primary teaching tools.

In 1979, Pat Lewis, a Washington Star reporter spent two months in four high schools in the metropolitan area, one of which was Coolidge High School. Sitting in a half-dozen classes, she described two classes in detail. Here is a U.S. History class.

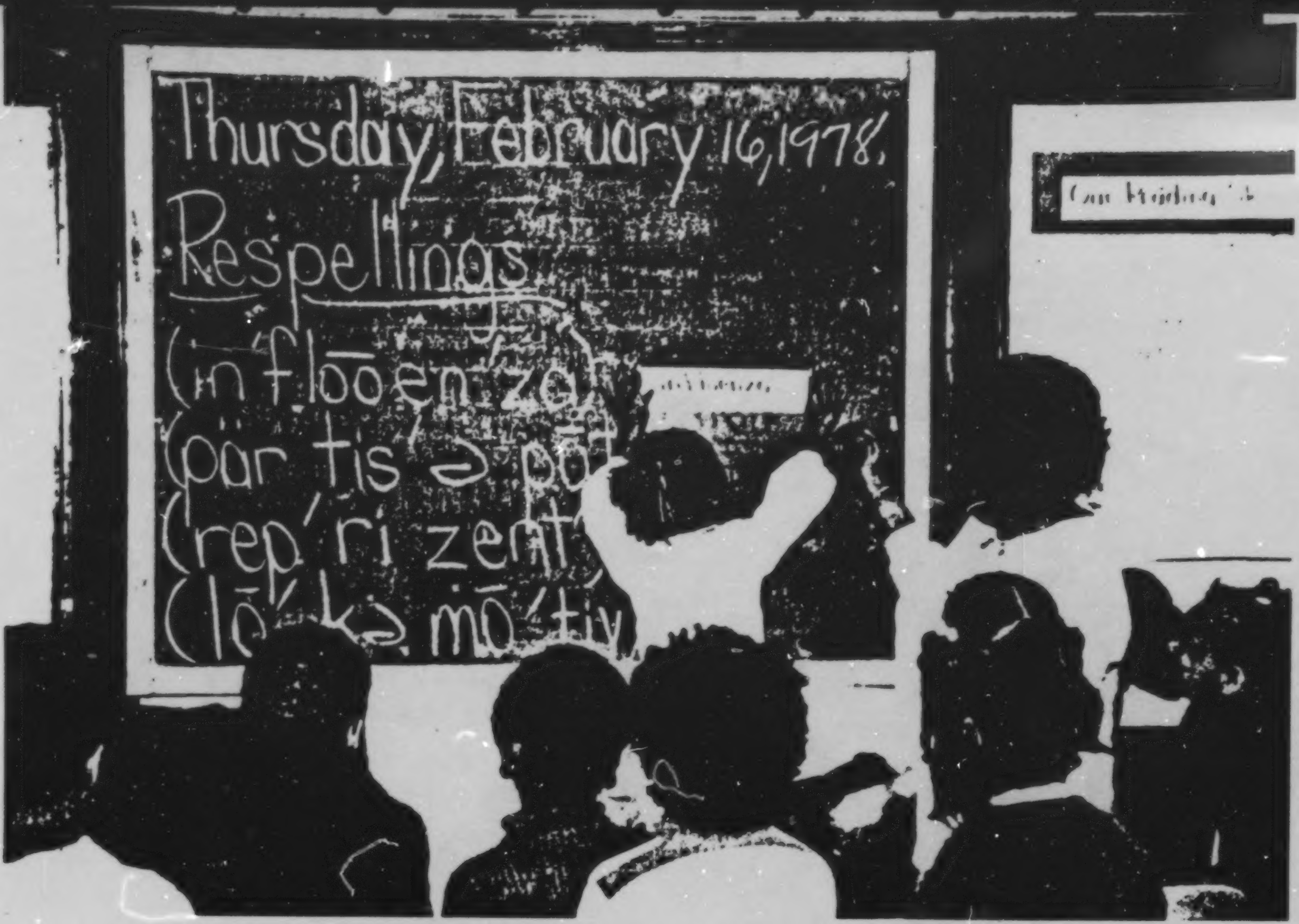
> Fourteen don't answer roll call in room 230 at Coolidge. Ten do.
>
> 'The test is tomorrow. Today I am going to review with you the exact questions on the test.' Rita Dinnerstein tells her U.S. History class.
>
> 'What's an act?'
>
> 'A law,' someone replies.
>
> 'What was the National Labor Relations Act?'

Figure 16. PATTERNS OF INSTRUCTION IN WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOMS, 1967-1976



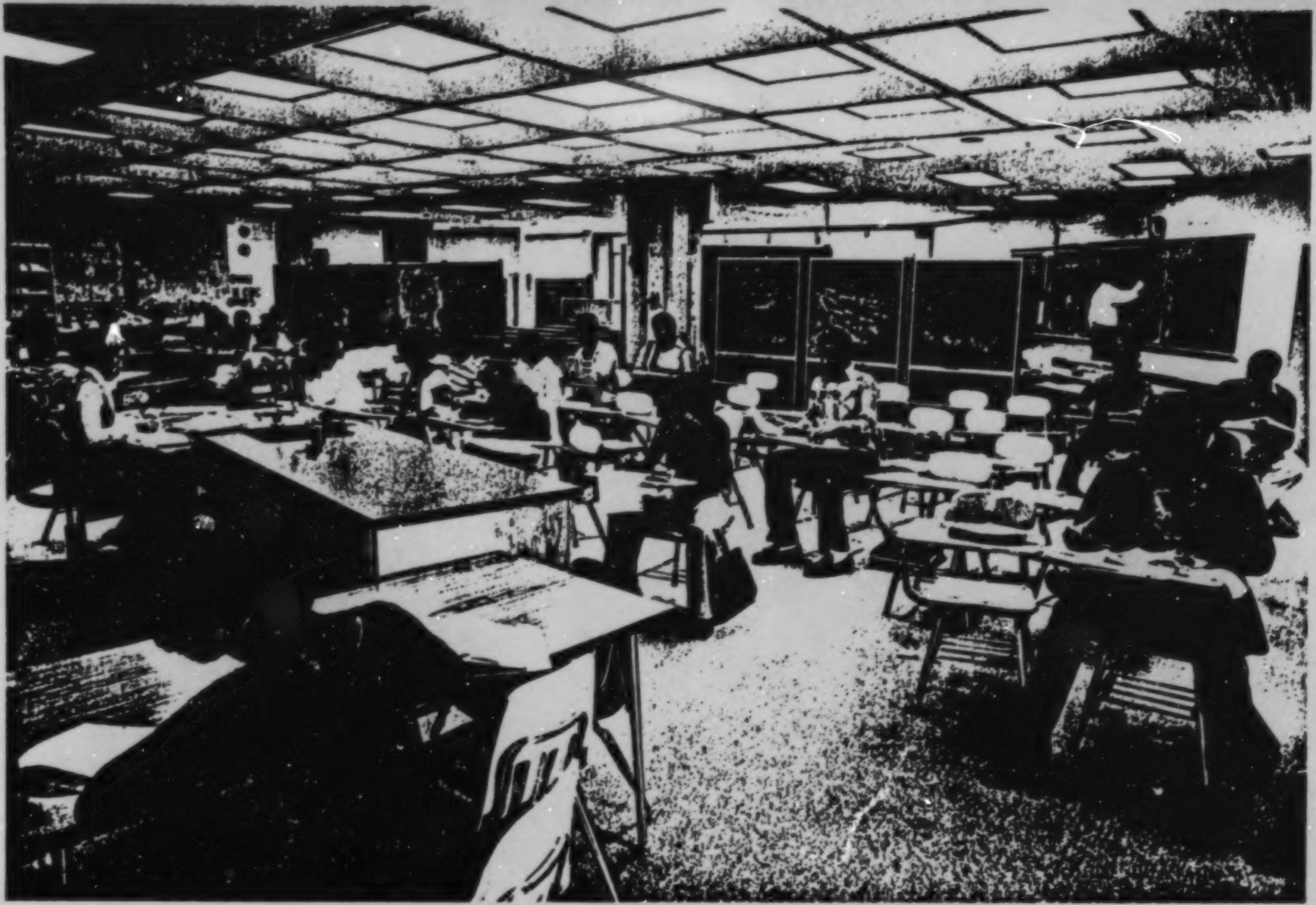

Color Words

Takoma Elementary School, Washington, D.C., 1977 (D.C. Media Center)


Thursday, February 16, 1978.
Respellings
(in flōō en′ zə
(pär tis′ ə pāt
(rep′ ri zent′
(lō′ kə mō′ tiv

Langdon Elementary School, Washington, D.C., 1978 (D.C. Media Center)

Dunbar High School, Washington, D.C., 1977 (D.C. Media Center)



Dunbar High School, Science Class, Washington, D.C., 1977 (D.C. Media Center)

No one answers. 'It's in your textbook,' she says.

'It is?' someone asks quietly.

Four students saunter into class eight minutes after it was scheduled to begin.

'Three tardies are equal to a cut,' Dinnerstein yells. 'And I've had it.'

'The National Labor Relations Act was passed in 1935. What did it guarantee?'

Someone answers, 'collective bargaining.'

There is lots of noise in the hallway. Faces appear in the windows of the wooden door and peer into the classroom.

'What's the difference between industrial and craft unions?'

No one answers.

Dinnerstein raises her voice. 'This is a review! We've done this!'

A student in the hallway steps into the room, holding the door open.

'Mrs. Dinnerstein, someone wants to see you.'

Dinnerstein marches to the door: 'I'm about to explode.'

It is eleven minutes after class is supposed to have begun. Dinnerstein steps out into the hallway and comes right back. 'You interrupted my class,' she tells someone out there.

'What is a union?' she asks her class.

One student reads the answer from his notes. When he finishes, Dinnerstein tells another student, 'If you want to play games, feel free to leave.'

'Who said I'm playing games?' the student retorts....

'What is a union shop?' she asks.

One girl says the answer quietly.

'I can't hear you," Dinnerstein tells her.

A boy sitting next to the girl repeats the girl's answer for his own. It is correct.

The class is quiet now, 20 minutes after it began. The students are listening. A few know the answers to the questions that Dinnerstein first gave them on Monday. This is Thursday. On Friday, those same questions will be on the test. 112

The reporter suggests that the class was a disaster in its low level of content, the amount of subject matter covered in a week, and hallway distractions and interruptions spilling over into the classroom. Such vignettes judge implicitly the teacher's performance and give teachers good reason to bar reporters from their classes. Since I have seen Dinnerstein teach I do know that this episode from one class does not in any way capture the overall quality of her instruction What it does convey is another instance of the question-answer format, reinforced by reliance upon the text, and teaching the entire class as one.

Summarizing patterns of instruction between 1967-1975 in three settings at a brief moment of time when intense and widespread efforts were undertaken to reform classroom teaching is necessary to determine if what occurred in these varied places is comparable to what occurred during the years 1920-1940 when the tides of progressivism ran strong in school systems.

1. Core of Informal Practices. As with progressive approaches of a generation earlier, a set of teaching practices that can be labeled informal were evident in a considerable number of elementary classrooms in the three sites from which I collected data. Artifacts of open classrooms were present in learning centers, tables and desks clustered so that students could speak and work together, the increased use of varied groups for instruction, and relatively free movement of students in the class space without securing the teacher's permission. Uneven in development and selective in use, these practices seldom captured more than a fourth of the classrooms in any district, if that many. Even fewer teachers employed other informal approaches such as student decision-

making on what to study and determining how much time is spent on what topics, or using learning centers as the central vehicle of instruction.

Comparisons between the interwar decades and this period show rough likenesses in the extent of the spread in certain teaching approaches. While there were a few teachers who strived to duplicate the entire panoply of a child-centered classroom, most of the elementary classrooms that showed some evidence of informal practices were selective in what was incorporated into the daily routines. These mixtures of informal and formal practices resemble, I believe, the hybrid forms of teacher-centered progressivism that I described earlier. One major difference, however, was that—unlike Denver and New York in the 1920s and 1930s--at no site that I studied, was there formal school board or superintendent advocacy and organizational mechanisms constructed to implement and incorporate open classrooms into the teacher's instructional repertoire.

2. Instruction in regular and alternative high schools. Very little evidence turned up in the two settings to show that classroom practice in regular high schools varied substantially from that of a generation earlier. While content was revised in subject areas to link it to events in students' lives or heighten interest and class discussions tended to be quite informal, the basic instructional sequences and patterns reported earlier remained in place.

Even though the number of classrooms was only a tiny fraction and the methods I used to categorize inexact, the convergence in results is striking--considering that the accounts come from multiple sources and cover diverse settings. In alternative high schools, the categories of instruction, and here the evidence is, indeed, sparse, shows no substantial difference in the range of techniques used by teachers although the frequency of some approaches that involve students, especially in discussions and classroom informality, resemble elementary patterns for student-centered instruction. The picture of high school teaching that emerges from these accounts is unmistakably teacher-centered and remarkably akin to what showed up three to four decades earlier.

3. Elementary and High School Instruction. As in the 1920s and 1930s, a higher percentage of student-centered practices entered the lower rather than higher grades. There is some evidence to demonstrate that, in both periods, the extent of student-centeredness peaked in the primary grades and descended until it bottomed out in the senior high school at a fraction of where the elementary levels were. In other words, versions of student-centered instruction appeared more frequently in the elementary grades, particularly in the primary years, and virtually disappeared by high school.

4. Teacher-centered Instruction. Dominating the classroom were at least two forms of teacher-centeredness. The pure form--whole class instruction, teachers talking most of the time while students listen, limited range of activities done by the entire class at same time, and little student mobility--characterized the high school. A hybrid form of teacher-centeredness with teachers using diverse classroom groupings, allowing more informality in instructional talk, movement and space arrangements appeared. Student-centered instruction across the major categories captured only a very small fraction of teachers at any given time.

What appeared as a direction by 1940 shows up with more clarity by 1975. Certain child-centered teaching practices became increasingly more common in elementary classrooms: flexible seating patterns, student movement within the classroom, and use of varied groupings. Other practices such as learning centers and small group work show up less frequently but sufficiently to be noted. Looking back to 1900, however, these modest changes give the elementary classroom of the 1970s a decidedly different appearance. But the appearance masks continuities that the limited evidence suggests as remaining quite potent. Teachers continued to monopolize classroom verbal exchanges; teachers determined what activities would occur for how long and who would participate. Working alone at a desk while the teacher either supervised or worked with another group continued as a dominant instructional pattern.

In high schools, pedagogy since 1900 in the five academic subjects altered very little except for the formal recitation. Raising of hands, yelling out of answers, informal discussion techniques replaced standing at one's desk or in the front of the room to answer the teacher's questions. Whole group instruction, teacher-controlled classroom talk, little student movement, and little variety in tasks—given the evidence from local sites—marked the high school classroom in the 1970s.

NOTES

[1] Vito Perrone, et. al., Two Elementary Classrooms: Views From The Teacher, Children, and Parents, (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co.,1977), pp. 1-20.

[2] Philip Jackson, The Teacher And The Machine, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1968), pp. 4.

[3] Lawrence Cremin, "The Free School Movement: A Perspective," Notes on Education, October, 1973, pp. 171.

[4] Ibid., pp. 2-3.

[5] Vito Perrone, "A View of School Reform," in Ruth Dropkin and Arthur Tobier (eds.), Roots of Open Education in America (New York: The City College Workshop Center for Open Education, 1976), pp. 186-187; Vito Perrone, "Open Education: Promise and Problems," Phi Delta Kappan Fastback, (Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappan Educational Foundation, 1972), pp. 10-11.

[6] Roland Barth, Open Education and the American School, (New York: Agathon Press, 1972); Joseph Featherstone, "The British and Us," The New Republic, September 11, 1971, pp. 20-25 and "Tempering a Fad," September 25, 1971, pp. 17-21.

[7] Featherstone, "The British and Us," p. 20.

[8] Roland Barth, "Should We Forget About Open Education?" Saturday Review, November 6, 1973, p. 59; for examples of checklists, see New York State Education Department, Information and Planning Kit for Use in Developing Open Education Programs, (Albany, New York: Task Force on Open Education, 1971); Anne Bussis, et. al., Beyond Surface Curriculum, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1976); for warnings about too rapid an embrace of open classrooms, see Roland Barth article in Saturday Review; Perrone's PDK Fastback; Ruth Flurry, "Open Education: What Is It?" in Ewald Nyquist and Gene Hawes (eds.) Open Education (New York: Bantam Books, 1972), pp. 102-110; Charles Silberman (ed.) Open Classroom Reader, (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), pp. 297-298.

[9] Robert A. Horwitz, "Psychological Effects of the Open Classroom," Review of Educational Research, 49, (Winter, 1979), pp. 72-73; Kathleen Devaney, "Developing Open Education in America: A Review of Theory and Practice in the Public Schools," (Washington: Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1973), pp. 3-5; Perrone, PDK Fastback, pp. 12-21.

[10] Silberman (ed.), pp. 297-298.

[11] For example, see Newsweek, 77, (May 3, 1971), p. 55; Henry Resnick, "Promise of Change in North Dakota," Saturday Review, 54, (April 17, 1971) pp. 67-69; New York Times, October 11, 1970, p. 68.

[12] Resnick, pp. 67-68; Silberman, Crisis in the Classroom, chapters 7 and 11; Vito Perrone and Warren Strandberg, "The New School" in Nyquist and Hawes, pp. 275-291; The North Dakota Statewide Study of Education, Educational Development for North Dakota, 1967-1975, An Overview, (Grand Forks, North Dakota: Center for Teaching and Learning, University of North Dakota, 1973), pp. 6-9; Michael Patton, "Structural Dimensions of Open Education," (Grand Forks: Center for Teaching and Learning, 1973), p. 7.

[13] Patton, p. 21.

[14] Kathleen Devaney, "The New School of Behavioral Studies in Education," (Grand Forks, North Dakota: Center for Teaching and Learning, 1974), pp. 209, 211.

[15] Ibid., p. 219.

[16] Richard G. Landry, "Comparative and Longitudinal Analyses of Teaching Intern Classrooms on Selected Dimensions of Openness: Third Year (1975)," (Grand Forks, North Dakota: Center for Teaching and Learning, 1975), p. 5.

[17] Vincent Dodge, "The Fargo-Madison School Program: A Cooperative School-University Effort," (Grand Forks, North Dakota: Center for Teaching and Learning, 1974), Item VI, pp. 1-5; Fargo-Moorhead Forum, October 4, 1970; October 25, 1970; November 29, 1970.

[18] Grand Forks Herald, August 26, 1969; Larry Hoiberg, "We're Putting It All Together at Washington Elementary School," (Grand Forks, North Dakota: Washington Elementary School, 1971), mimeo, pp. 1-51.

[19] Final Report, Title III, Elementary and Secondary Education Act: The Impact of the Teacher and His Staff, (Grand Forks, North Dakota: Grand Forks Public Schools, 1970), mimeo, p. 56.

[20] Silberman, Crisis in the Classroom, pp. 290-297; Silberman (ed.) Open Classroom Reader, pp. 43-52; Life, October 1, 1971; Today's Education, February, 1973, p. 35.

[21] Marshall, p. 180.

[22] Patton, p. 7.

[23] Landry, p. 14.

[24] Ronald Kutz, "An Analysis of the Use of Math Manipulative Materials in North Dakota," (Grand Forks, North Dakota: Bureau of Educational Research and Services, 1977), pp. 21, 37.

[25] New York (City) Public Schools, *Facts and Figures, 1977-1978*, (New Yopk: Board of Education, 1978), pp. 1, 5, 11.

[26] Ravitch, p. 239.

[27] For a sampling of the diverse literature written about New York City schools in this decade, see Diane Ravitch, *The Great School Wars*, chapters 23-33; David Rogers, *110 Livingston Street*, (New York: Random House, 1968); Miriam Wasserman, *The School Fix, NYC, USA*, (New York: Outerbridge and Dienstfrey, 1970); Maurice R. Berube and Marilyn Gittell (eds.) *Confrontation at Ocean Hill-Brownsville*, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1969); Estelle Fuchs, *Teachers Talk*, (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1969).

[28] Center for Urban Education, *Open Door: New York City*, (New York: Center for Urban Education, 1970), pp. 11-12.

[29] Charles Silberman pointed out that in the midst of writing *Crisis in the Classroom* he had met Weber, read her manuscript about British primary schools, and wrote "our work took a new direction. We went off to England to see for ourselves." Ruth Dropkin (ed.) *Changing Schools*, (New York: City College Workshop Center for Open Education, 1978), p. 48.

[30] Beth Alberty, *Continuity and Connection: Curriculum in Five Open Classrooms*, (New York: City College Workshop Center for Open Education, 1979), pp. 6-7; Chitra Karunkakaran, "Life and Work in Several Communities: A Case Study of Open Education," (Chicago: Center for New Schools, 1978), p. 30.

[31] David Rogers, *An Inventory of Educational Improvement Efforts in the New York City Schools*, (New York: Teachers College Press, 1977), pp. 82-84.

[32] Dropkin, p. 51.

[33] Some examples of open classrooms across the city are reported in the *New York Times*, January 8, 1973 on P.S. 24 (Bronx) and P.S. 27 (Bronx) in the January 17, 1973 issue; New York (City) Board of Education, *Staff Bulletin* May 15, 1972 on P.S. 92 (Bronx); *United Teacher*, June 25, 1972, pp. 15-16 has a description of P.S. 35 (Queens); *New York Supervisor*, Spring, 1975, p. 19 describes P.S. 13 (Queens). In addition, there are accounts written

by teachers such as Herbert Kohl, *36 Children*, (New York: New American Library, 1967); Gloria Channon, *Homework*, (New York: Outerbridge and Dienstfrey, 1970). Masters theses from teachers enrolled in the Bank Street College of Education detail classroom experiences. See theses written by Donna C. De Gaetani, "Beginning an Open Classroom in a Public School" (1974); Mamie Gumbs, "Humanizing Learning Through Open Classroom Procedures and Self-Discovery Methods" (1974); Helen Haratonik, "A Descriptive Study of an Approach to Teaching Reading in an Open Classroom," (1973); Alicia Montalvo, "Diary of an Open Classrom," (1972); Helaine R. Meisler, "Educational Change in a School Mandated 'Open' As Seen Through the Eyes of an Advisor," (1977).

[34] *New York Times*, January 8, 1973.

[35] *New York Times*, July 25, 1970; "Vermont Design for Education" in Nyquist and Hawes, pp. 55-62; Joseph Lelyveld, "The Most Powerful Man in the School System," *New York Times Magazine*, March 21, 1971, p. 31; *New York Times*, July 25, 1970.

[36] *New York Times*, January 30, 1971.

[37] Ibid., February 7, 1971; December 20, 1970; and January 24, 1971 (a paid advertisement).

[38] Ibid., January 8, 1973.

[39] Edward Chittenden, et. al., *First Year Evaluative Study of the Workshop Center for Open Education, City College of New York*, (New York: Workshop Center for Open Education, 1973); Dropkin, pp. 51-53.

[40] Karunkakaran, pp. 205-207.

[41] Gerald Levy, *Ghetto School*, (New York: Pegasus Publishing Co.,1970), chapters 4 and 7.

[42] Channon, pp. 23-24.

[43] Ibid., p. 116.

[44] DeGaetano, masters' thesis, p. 4.

[45] Ibid., pp. 14, 36.

[46] Montalvo, masters' thesis, pp. 4-5, 33, 57.

[47] Joseph Lelyveld, "Class 4-4: Educational Theories Meet Reality," New York Times, October 9, 1970, p. 39; November 16, 1970, p. 39; November 25, 1970, p. 39; December 20, 1970, p. 49; January 8, 1971, p. 33; January 16, 1971, p. 31; January 22, 1971, p. 41; February 9, 1971, p. 41; March 11, 1971, p. 41; May 29, 1971, p. 25; July 1, 1971, p. 49.

[48] Ibid., October 9. 1970, p. 39.

[49] Ibid., March 11, 1971, p. 41.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid., May 29. 1971, p. 25.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Philip Lopate, Being With Children, (New York: Bantam Books, 1975), pp. 24, 29.

[54] For background to the alternative school movement, I used: Terrence E. Deal and Robert Nolan (eds.) Alternative Schools (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1978); Dan L. Duke, The Transformation of the School (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1978); Allan Graubard, Free the Children (New York: Pantheon, 1973); Mario Fantini, Public Schools of Choice (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973); Mary Anne Raywid, "The First Decade of Public School Alternatives," Kappan, April, 1981, pp. 551-557; David T. Moore, "Alternative Schools: A Review," (New York: Institute for Urban and Minority Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1978).

[55] Raywid, p. 551; Moore, pp. 21-22.

[56] Deal and Nolan, p. 3.

[57] Terrence E. Deal and Robert Nolan, "Alternative Schools: A Conceptual Map," School Review, (November, 1978), p. 33; Anne Flaxman and Kerry Hanstead (eds.) 1977-1978 National Directory of Public Alternative Schools, (Amherst, Massachusetts: National Alternative Schools Program at School of Education, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, 1978).

[58] Mary McBride, "Five Alternative Schools," (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Maryland, 1979); Harvard Educational Review, "Alternative Schools," 42, (August, 1972).

[59] Moore, pp. 9-10.

[60] Duke, pp. 40. 44-46, 51.

[61] New York (City) Public Schools, School Profiles, 1970-1971, (New York: Division of System Planning, 1971), Appendix A, p. 6.

[62] Rogers, An Inventory of Educational Improvement Efforts, pp. 10-11; Diane Divoky, "New York's Mini-Schools," Saturday Review, 54, (December, 18, 1971), pp. 60-67.

[63] Rogers, An Inventory of Educational Improvement Efforts, pp. 8, 22-25. The schools I deal with exclude Bronx High School of Science, Beach Channel High School, John Dewey High School and others that are city-wide, have themes of special interests and usually have requirements that students have to meet in order to be admitted. These schools, in the broad sense, are alternatives but they differ markedly from other alternatives in size, ideology, student involvement in governance, etc.

[64] New York Times, November 17, 1971; November 1, 1971; July 1, 1975; Divoky, pp. 60-67.

[65] Rogers, An Inventory of Educational Improvement Efforts, pp. 14-22.

[66] Divoky, pp. 60-67; New York Times, November 1, 1971 and July 1, 1975.

[67] New York Times, November 1, 1971.

[68] Ibid., May 24, 1971, p. 33.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid.

[72] New York Times, January 8, 1973, p. 57.

[73] Ibid.; Carol Gladstone, "What Constitutes a remedial Reading Lesson," High Points, (March, 1975), p. 29.

[74] New York Times, December 9, 1973.

[75] Ibid., September 8, 1975; January 15, 1975; November 16, 1975.

[76] New York (City) Board of Education, *Directory of the Public Schools, 1978-1979*, (New York: Board of Education, 1979), pp. 5, 27, 39, 51, 122-129.

[77] Carl Hansen, *Danger in Washington*, (West Nyack, New York: Parker Publishing Co., 1968), pp. 91-106; Larry Cuban, "*Hobson v. Hansen*: A Study in Organizational Response," *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 11, (Spring, 1975), pp. 15-37.

[78] Hansen, chapters 1-5; Constance M. Green, *The Secret City*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1967), chapter 13; A. Harry Passow, *Toward Creating a Model Urban School System*, (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1967), chapters 2, 4, 5.

[79] Cuban, p. 35.

[80] Larry Cuban, "Reform By Fiat: The Clark Plan in Washington, 1970-1972," *Urban Education*, 9, (April, 1974), pp. 8-32.

[81] *Washington Post*, October 13, 1980, p. C-3; Vincent Reed, "An Introduction to the Competency-Based Curriculum," *Journal of Personalized* Instruction, 3, (Winter, 1978), pp. 199-200.

[82] A. Harry Passow, *Toward Creating a Model Urban School System*, (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1967).

[83] Ibid., p. 3.

[84] Ibid., p. 265.

[85] Ibid., p. 266.

[86] Ibid., p. 235.

[87] Ibid., pp. 275-276.

[88] Ibid., pp. 295, 305, 312, 322.

[89] District of Columbia Public Schools, "Model School Division in a Capsule,"

(Washington: Model School Division, 1969). In 1950, the all-Black Cardozo High School moved into the recently-closed building that used to house the all-white Central High School.

[90] H.R. Cort, et. al., *An Evaluation of the Innovation Team*, (Washington: Washington School of Psychiatry, 1969), pp. 7-8.

[91] Cort, pp. 227-228, 240; also I had frequent and sustained contacts with the Innovation Team, its initial director (Mary Lela Sherburne), and Assistant Superintendent Norman Nickens while I directed the Cardozo Project in Urban Teaching—one of two dozen programs in the Model School Division--and later, when I administered the district-wide staff development program.

[92] Cort, p. 240.

[93] Esin Kaya, "An Evaluation and Description of the Advisory and Learning Exchange, 1973-1974," (Washington: Advisory and Learning Exchange, 1974), pp. ii-iii.

[94] *Washington Star*, August 16, 1970; Theresa H. Elofson, "Open Education in the Elementary School: Six Teachers Who Were Expected to Change," (Urbana, Illinois: Center for Instructional Research and Curriculum Evaluation, 1973), pp. 8-154.

[95] *Washington Post*, May 13, 1973, C3.

[96] Paul Lauter and Florence Howe, "The Short Happy Life of Adams-Morgan Community School," *Harvard Educational Review*, 38, (Spring, 1968), pp. 235-262; *Washington Star*, March 1, 1970; *Washington Post*, July 6, 1971 and May 13, 1973.

[97] *Washington Post*, December 11, 1979.

[98] Behavioral Service Consultants, "Final Evaluation Report: Training Center for Open-Space Schools, ESEA Title III Project," (Greenbelt, Maryland: Behavioral Service Consultants, Inc., 1974); "Brookland School Plan," February, 1974.

[99] "Brookland Plan," n.p.; *Washington Post*, December 11, 1979.

[100] Behavioral Services Consultants, pp. 21, 47.

[101] District of Columbia Public Schools, *Data Resume Book*, (Washington: Division of Research and Evaluation, 1976), p. 28, 32; Kaya, p. 9.

102
District of Columbia Public Schools, "Open Space vs. Self-Contained Classrooms," (Washington: Division of Research and Evaluation, 1980).

103
Washington Post, December 11, 1979; I observed these teacher efforts to close off open space when I visited Bruce-Monroe and Brookland schools in 1981.

104
Notes from my visit; Behavioral Service Consultants, pp. 60, 71.

105
In addition to my observations, reporter Judy Valente of the Washington Post wrote a series of articles on secon-grade teacher Dorothy Porter of Bruce-Monroe. See October 13, 1980 and May 24, 1981 issues.

106
As in New York City, I exclude continuation schools for potential or actual dropouts (e.g. Spingarn program); the Capitol Page, Duke Ellington School of Performing Arts, Banneker High School for the Gifted, and separate vocational schools. Admission criteria differed markedly in these schools from alternatives I describe as well as other substantial differences in governance, size, etc.

107
Washington Daily News, November 14, 1968; Washington Post, November 22, 1968.

108
Washington Post, November 1, 1970.

109
George Rhodes, Jr., "Action Programs in Progress in the Secondary Schools," (Washington: District of Columbia Public Schools, 1970), pp. 21-22, 24; Washington Daily News, March 9, 1971; Washington Post, March 9, 1971.

110
Barbara Sizemore, Superintendent Memorandum to School Board, "Procedures for Alternative Programs," June 19, 1974, p. 4.

111
I had visited the Literary Arts program at the Lemuel Penn Career Center; I had had discussions with teachers at the Duke Ellington School of Performing Arts. Also see Washington Post, March 9, 1971.

112
Washington Star, December 31, 1979.

Chapter 5

CLASSROOM PRACTICE, 1967-1980

I first met Carmen Wilkinson in 1975 when in my regular visits to schools I walked into her room at Jamestown Elementary and was stunned. In my first year as Arlington County Superintendent, I had already seen over 300 elementary open space and self-contained classrooms. This was the only one I had seen that had mixed ages (grades 1-4) and learning stations in which students spent most of the day working independently and moved freely about the room; they worked in small groups and individually while Wilkinson moved about the room asking and answering questions,giving advice, listening, and working with various students. Called by parents, children, and staff "The Castle," the class used two adjacent rooms. Wilkinson teamed with another teacher, and at that time, two student teachers. She orchestrated in an unobtrusive manner scores of tasks in a quiet, low-key fashion.

Had Lillian Weber, Vito Perrone, Charles Silberman, William Kilpatrick, Harold Rugg,and Elizabeth Irwin been looking over my shoulder as I watched Wilkinson and her colleague work with the fifty children that April morning, I am sure they would have been pleased with the presence of the "Castle" at Jamestown. Had they walked the halls with me and looked into the other seventeen self-contained classrooms, they would have seen only one other classroom similar to the "Castle."[1]

Over the years I served as Superintendent, I visited Wilkinson, who had taught for thirty two years(1980), at least ten more times and saw her classroom change into a one-grade self-contained room yet retaining flexible groupings and learning centers that were integrated into the instructional day. Wilkinson's informal classroom was unusual at Jamestown and among 500 other Arlington elementary teachers between 1975-1980.

Unusual also was Bobby Schildt's social studies classroom in 1975 at Hoffman-Boston, an alternative junior high school in Arlington. When I saw Schildt's room for the first time during my visits in my initial year as superintendent, there wasn't any class for me to see. She had individualized her courses into a series of projects,contracts and learning stations that she collectively called a social studies laboratory. For each course, students would gather once a week as a class to discuss some topic. For the rest of the week, students worked at various tasks and centers completing contracts they had negotiated with Schildt. She spent class time asking questions of individual students, helping some that were stuck, and reading and commenting on work that would be placed into student cubbies along the wall. Teacher-made, teacher-gathered, and commercial materials overflowed the room.

As with Wilkinson, I saw Schildt a number of times over the years. When I last saw her in 1981, she was still teaching social studies to seventh through ninth graders although now it was in an alternative school that had been consolidated into a 7-12 grade secondary school. But the laboratory was no more. The high degree of independent and individual work through contracts and learning stations were now carried on periodically, woven together with more whole-class discussions, simulations, role-playing, and small group work.

The subtle changes that occurred in these Arlington classrooms mirrored I believe, in a number of important ways what happened nationally to efforts aimed at reforming teaching practices. In this chapter, I will sketch out the swift shift in attention from informal education to an renewed, intense preoccupation with the teaching of basic skills, minimum competencies, and accountability that swelled in the mid-1970s and spilled over into the early 1980s. Then I will try to reconstruct what happened in classrooms both nationally and in one school district, Arlington County, Virginia, after this abrupt shift.

The swiftness in which media and popular interest in informal classrooms vanished was breathtaking. Within a brief period of time, roughly between 1968-1974, open classrooms and alternative schools attracted national attention, became a de rigeur innovation, and, then began the slide off the edge of the public's radar screen. Mirroring that rise and fall in both public and professional interest are the number of references to newspaper articles, trade books, television programs, journal articles, academic research, and research notes in the Readers' Guide, Educational Index, New York Times and Washington Post indices and other similar listings.

While other school reform impulses have surfaced and coalesced into movements, as this one had, their lifespans usually stretched over a few decades. Somehow this impulse of informal education and alternative schools was telescoped into less than a decade—allowing for regional and local differences. It seemed almost as if, by 1975, public and school professionals, for any number of reasons, flicked the dial and switched television channels to another station. Or to shift images, I recall the cartoons I saw as a child when the narrator said the sun set and I saw the sun clunk down on the horizon. Whatever image I would use, the point about the brief life span of informal education is evident. By 1975, the climate surrounding open classrooms and alternative schools had changed substantially. Obviously, such generalizations about a country with nearly 15,000 school districts, millions of teachers and children in the 1970s cannot hold for all schools. Yet while an incoming tide seldom arrives evenly, there is still a high tide.

Exactly when the shift occurred varies from place to place. One reporter marked the end of the passion for informal schools in the founding of alternative schools committed to traditional approaches. Pasadena, California established its John Marshall Fundamental School in 1973; Palo Alto, a leader in informal education, created the Hoover Contemporary School in 1974 with a program, according to its brochure, that concentrated upon:

> academic skills and subject matter and the establishment of good study habits ... in a quiet and orderly environment.... A majority of the school hours will be devoted to the teaching of reading, writing, spelling, language and arithmetic.

More and more school districts established "Basic Alternative Schools" as Prince Georges County, Maryland did in 1975. Arlington's entry came in 1978 with the Page Traditional Alternative School. "Back to the basics," a phrase with far more political baggage packed into it than affection for the familiar trinity of basic skills, became a rallying slogan throughout the mid-1970s.[2]

Whether it was a knee-jerk reaction to the perceived changes that had occurred in schools and classrooms often captured in a code word borrowed from an earlier generation of critics, "permissiveness," or persistent reports of declining test scores, increasing school vandalism and disrespect for teachers, or the educational version of the political conservative climate that spilled onto schools with state mandates for teacher accountability and minimum competency tests---I cannot say.

Whatever the explanations, there was a renewed passion for orderliness, stability, and academic skills captured in symbols that plucked nostalgic strings within both citizens and parents: rows of desks facing the blackboard and teachers desk, the teacher in front of the room, required homework, detentions, dress codes, spelling bees, letter grades on report cards, tougher promotion standards and school-wide discipline rules.

Implicit in these slogans and symbols was that most teachers had either converted or threatened to turn their classrooms into open or quasi-open classrooms where children made choices, standards were undefined, basic skills were neglected and order was problematic. The issue, I believe, is not whether this is a misrepresentation of informal classrooms--which it is, although a persistent search among two million classrooms would probably turn up instances of whatever anyone would like to demonstrate about teachers. The issue is the gap between the available evidence and this profound misconception of the frequency and spread of open classrooms. As the limited and spare data I gathered from New York City, Washington,D.C., and North Dakota for 1967-1975 suggest, open classrooms did, indeed, turn up in numerous and unpredictable places, catching on in an ink-splattering fashion but at no point in the brief passion for the reform did it capture more than a small minority of teachers and schools.

In no place could I find a majority of classrooms taught informally, even broadly defined, for any sustained period of time. The largest estimate I came across was drawn from a researcher who claimed that 60% of the schools in Roslyn (N.Y.) had at least *one* open classroom. The other estimate came from a survey sent by the National Open Education Association in 1974 to superintendents of 153 cities with over 100,000 population. Ninety-one cities (59%) responded, meaning that either the superintendent or someone else was delegated the task (Lillian Weber responded for New York City) to complete the questionnaire. The question from which an estimate of the spread of open classrooms was constructed read: "About ____% of the classrooms in my city make substantial use of open approaches to education."[3]

The problems of interpretation packed into the words "substantial" and "open approaches" are no greater than having a central office person whose interest in informal education is known make a few inquiries or phone calls to principals he or she knows has such classes and compile the replies into a response of how many teachers were using "open approaches." The mean estimate from superintendents and their designees in the ninety one cities was 17%; the median was 10%. Such estimates are, at best, no better than informed guesses, laced with a heavy dose of hope. They are not unlike the predictions of 80% of these same administrators who said that in the next five years (1975-1980) "open approaches would increase in their cities."[4]

I cite these figures only to underscore how limited the spread of the movement was in public schools by 1974 even when optimism infused school officials' statements. Lacking reliable national data on the frequency or spread of open classrooms directs me to sample scattered descriptions, studies, and accounts that have appeared between 1967-1975 in order to determine if a fabric can be stitched together that either supports or rebuts the data I gathered thus far.

In the late 1960s, John Goodlad and a team of researchers observed 150 primary grade classrooms in 67 schools in 13 states. They wanted to test whether the widely publicized educational innovations of the 60s--team teaching, ungraded primaries, curricular reform, individualized instruction had crossed the threshold of the classroom. What they found were "remarkably similar" classroom programs in school after school, irrespective of local differences. The classrooms they observed were marked by:

> ... telling, teachers' questioning individual children in group settings, and an enormous amount of seemingly quite routine seatwork.

The primary tools of instruction were the textbook followed by workbooks and supplementary readings.[5]

The common pattern of instruction in the whole group was question and answer. When the teacher divided the class into groups for reading—a daily activity—one group read to the teacher, one group read independently and one group did seatwork related to current, previous, or future work. "Rarely," Goodlad wrote, "were children engaged in self-initiated and self-directed small groups or individual activity." The report concluded that in subject matter, materials, and teaching practice the 150 classrooms were "geared to group norms" rather than individual differences. "Judging from our sample," he wrote, "childhood schooling is more vanilla than ... neapolitan."[6]

Goodlad was disappointed. In looking behind the classroom door, he and his associates found a dreary sameness—"a flatness"—at a level of schooling where promised reforms had a reasonable chance for success. Reforms were "blunted on school and classroom door." His team, interestingly enough, documented repeatedly that teacher reports of how innovative they were contrasted sharply with what observers reported. "Teachers sincerely thought they were individualizing instruction, encouraging inductive learning, involving children in group processes." Observers found that they were not, a finding consistent with results from other researchers.[7]

Examining a similar time span, the National Science Foundation commissioned a survey of research studies in curricular and instructional changes that had taken place in science, math, and social studies between 1955-1975. The results, drawn from a synthesis of surveys, classroom observation studies, and other research, were remarkably similar for the three subjects.

Math: Summarizing seven studies on elementary and secondary teachers verbal behavior in classrooms between 1968-1976,

.the teacher talks about two-thirds of the time,

.teachers tend to use a direct, rather structured approach.

In classroom practice, Suydam and Osborne cited eight studies (including Goodlad's) between 1959-1977, and concluded that:

.telling and questioning, usually in total-class groups is the prevailing teaching practice.

.tell-and-show and seatwork at the elementary level with homework-lecture-new homework at the secondary level are the dominant patterns of instruction. 8

Social Studies: A review of two decades of research including studies in the early 1970s, as with math, disclose a similar pattern that one researcher summarized, almost sadly, as:

> "... the students' social studies classes will be strikingly similar to those that many of us experienced as youngsters: textbook assignments followed by recitation led by a teacher who, in his or her own way, likes students and tries to show concern for them...." 9

Science: Summarizing nine studies of elementary school science (1963-1976), reviewers found that:

."there is more use of 'hands on' and laboratory types of instruction...."

."However, a substantial number of teachers do not emphasize laboratory activities. Lecture-discussion is the most common learning activity, followed by student demonstration. Reports and surveys indicate a substantial number of teachers (probably about 30-40%) teach science largely as a reading/lecture class."

.at the secondary level, there is less lecture and more "student-centered activity," than there used to be but "lecture and discussion is the predominant method used by teachers." 10

Another body of literature that allows a glimpse of existing practice are the studies of failed innovations, that is, descriptions and analyses of individual schools where a systematic and intentional effort to open up classrooms occurred and, for a number of reasons, failed to materialize. Smith's and Keith's Kensingston, a pseudonym for a St. Louis area elementary school in the mid-1960s, was expected to be a child-centered, staff-led operation in a new building; Cambire School is another pseudonym for a Boston elementary school in 1966-1967 where Gross and his colleagues documented how an inept administrator and unclear expectations for classroom changes such as student choices, small group work, individual attention, and centers produced an educational disaster; Barth's Attucks-Lincoln program in New Haven (1968-1969) where open classrooms staffed by bright, young but inexperienced white teachers in a majority Black school were, again for a variety of reasons, torpedoed. What all of these studies show is how tough it was to plan and implement changes in teacher's classroom behavior.[11]

To summarize, then, a few points are clear. That various stages of openness in classrooms existed and that such informal practices spread among some teachers is, as the evidence I gathered for North Dakota, New York City, and Washington, D.C. and scattered sites around the country, undeniable. There was a distinct minority, in a number of instances quite substantial, of teachers at any given time, in any given setting, involved in restructuring their classrooms to some degree. Yet, equally as clear, was the powerful tug of teacher-centered practices upon most classrooms between 1967-1975. Until more data are gathered that would throw the above statements into doubt, an overwhelming majority of teachers stayed within the range that can comfortably be called teacher-centered practices. Hence, "back to basics" slogans had little grounding in what had occurred in schools. As one teacher said, "Back to the Basics? We never left." What the slogans reveal about schools is less about what went on in classrooms but far more about the historic vulnerability of public schools to political issues in the culture as selected and translated for the public by newspapers, magazines, and, more recently, television.

What remains unclear, however, even puzzling, is why some teachers converted from teacher-centered practices to informal ones, why others modified their approaches by selectively incorporating some but not other informal techniques, and why some of these teachers, over time, slipped back into their previous patterns. Also, why have most teachers ignored both rhetoric and new practice, and persisted in their teacher-centered classrooms. Finally, what about teaching practices since the waning of open classrooms? The rhetoric of "back to the basics" hid more than it revealed about teaching. As I have tried to show, there was some movement away from the teacher-centered regularities—practices which seemed consistent with the claims of those wanting more stress on fundamental skills. What occurred seemed to be the introduction of more variation around teacher-centeredness and the legitimacy, if not viability, of varied forms of student-centered practices. To assess what happened in classrooms since 1975, I shall look at Arlington, Virgina, and then review some recent national studies of teaching practices.

ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA, 1974-1981

In turning to this school district, I am no longer an historian collecting data, evaluating sources, sifting the evidence, and drawing inferences from scattered fragments of information--all filtered through my values and experience as a teacher and administrator. When I write about Arlington, I write as a participant.

In 1974, I was appointed superintendent in Arlington. I served nearly seven years and left in 1981 to begin writing this study and teach at a university. The seven years I spent in Arlington were both exhilarating and exhausting. Viewing a school system from the cockpit of the superintendent's office, however, is a narrow perspective. While I will try to broaden the view in the narrative beyond what I saw, I raise the issue of my position to signal readers that other accounts of Arlington would probably vary both in detail and emphasis.

Because of my position, I visited classrooms repeatedly over a seven year period and gathered informally a great deal of information about teaching practices in the district. I saw over half of Arlington"s teachers in their rooms. Few people, professional or lay, have automatic access to as many classrooms as a superintendent does, should he or she choose to use it. I did. My visits to classrooms began in the six weeks prior to formally assuming the post. The School Board agreed to my request to spend a month and a half visiting schools and sitting in classes in order for me to become acquainted with principals and teachers before I took over the formal duties of the post. The Board, staff, and community knew that my last job previous to becoming Arlington's superintendent was as a social studies teacher in a Washington,D.C. high school. Because the Board and I agreed that improvement of student performance was one of our top agenda items, it was reasonable that I spend time with principals and teachers.

My routine for school visits was set in those initial six weeks. I would go unannounced to a school, stop in the principal's office, chat with him or her for a few minutes and then begin to walk through the building, stopping in classrooms. Most often my stay in a classroom ranged between fifteen minutes to a half-hour, with most being closer to the twenty minute mark. I jotted notes in a folder about what the teacher and students were doing, the arrangement of the classroom, and any unusual items I noticed going on in class, and student-teacher exchanges. If it were possible to speak with the teacher without disrupting the class, I did. If I could, I often would ask questions about the tasks students were working on, the materials the teacher was using,etc. As the years went by, teachers grew used to these visits and would often take the time to hit some items on their personal agenda in the school, the district, parents, union, etc.

Often cryptic and in a pidgin-shorthand, I took notes so that I could write to the teacher thanking her or him for answering my questions, or praising something about the class that I was impressed with, or simply to continue a point that we had been discussing. While I did not write every single teacher after each visit, notes from me were common. The purpose for my visiting classrooms and writing notes was explicitly stated and reaffirmed repeatedly in the articles I wrote in a local newspapers, speechs to the staff, and statements at public meetings: I believed that teachers should know that the superintendent was as concerned and interested in instruction as they were. One of the few ways I had to demonstrate that concern was to allocate my time--roughly one and a half days a week—to listening, watching, and answering questions in face-to-face exchanges with teachers, principals and students. In addition, at least twice during the school year, I taught workshops for teachers and administrators interested in improving thinking skills through the use of questions. All of these activities brought me in touch with a substantial number of teachers, and, I would like to believe, communicated some of my priorities about instruction and student performance. A few words about the school district and community in these years are necessary to establish the setting for the examination of classrooms.[12]

The Setting

Arlington, Virginia is located across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C. Once a quiet, middle-class white suburb with segregated schools, it has become a city with a flourishing multi-ethnic population in the last decade. In those years Arlington got smaller, older, and culturally diverse simultaneously. The facts are plain: in the last decade population has dropped from almost 180,000 in 1966 to about 160,000 in 1978; there are fewer and smaller families with schoolage children; there were sharp jumps in numbers of young singles and adults over 55 years of age. Coincident with these changes, scores of different nationalities had moved into the county swelling minority population but with insufficient numbers to counteract the other shifts.[13]

The impact of these changes upon schools has been dramatic. Pupil enrollment shrunk from 26,000 in 1968 to 14,000 in 1982. From nearly 40 schools, including three high schools, in 1968 to 31 schools in 1982. Also from less than 15% minority in 1970, the number of ethnic pupils doubled to over one-third in 1980. The jump came most sharply in non-English speaking minorities, particularly Hispanic, Korean, and Vietnamese children.[14]

If demographic changes were one pincer squeezing schools, the other was the rising cost of schooling. Spending more to buy less was as true for a school system as it was for families in the mid- to late-1970s. With less revenue allocated to the schools intersecting with inflation, the pincers tightened.

6

Since the appointed five-member School Board is fiscally dependent upon the elected five member County Board, state and federal revenue shortfalls plus inflation unraveled school budgets badly in these years,precisely at the same time that the cumulative effects of the demographic changes were being felt. Thus, the arms of the pincers closed.

What prevented the pinch from hurting Arlington schools too badly was that the County, measured by family income and assessed valuation of property, was wealthy. That wealth eased somewhat the painful transformation from suburb to city, especially during a recession. Arlington's prime location--close to Washington and improved further by the Metro rail system--and the County Board's cautious fiscal policies gave it the lowest tax rate in the metropolitan area (1980). Nonetheless, the County Board had to struggle with the politics of retrenchment. Irate property owners, most of whom no longer had children in school, wanted lower taxes. Their demands competed with requests from citizens who wanted higher school budgets, subsidies for the elderly, improved police, recreation, and social services.

Caught like everyone else in recessions, county officials tightened belts, bit bullets, and pursued other less vivid fiscal metaphors. The County emerged from the mid-1970s recession with most services intact, the lowest tax rate in the metropolitan area,and a school system that had become an annual target for holding costs down and reducing expenditures.

Political change also occurred. There had been a gradual but persistent shift from a Republican County Board to one composed of a coalition of Indedendents and Democrats. By 1971, this liberal bloc had attained complete control of the County Board. By 1978, however, Three Republicans had been elected to the five-member Board, thereby reasserting a majority they had enjoyed a decade earlier. Since the County Board appointed School Board members, those who served on the School Board throughout the 1970s had been appointed by the liberal majority. Because of the lag between the Republicans attaining a majority on the County Board (1978) and appointments to the County Board it was not until 1980 that the School Board had a three-member Republican majority.[15]

As part of this political shift in the 1970s, change also occurred in the School Board's relationship to its superintendent. When previous Republican School Boards in the 1960s left operational decision-making to its executive officer, appointees of the liberal majority intervened more actively in what most superintendents would have considered their turf. Inevitably, friction developed between the superintendent who had been appointed in 1969 by a School Board content to let their hired expert transact school business and the new, far more activist School Board. In 1974, the superintendent resigned. That year I was appointed.

I find it difficult to summarize my tenure as superintendent without succumbing to such temptations as listing achievements, cloaking errors, or telling battlefield stories. To avoid these obvious pitfalls, while risking a tumble into less evident traps, I will try to summarize my agenda and that of the School Board as it changed over the period and the inescapable issues that seized substantial amounts of my attention.

The Board that appointed me in 1974 was concerned with the consequences of shrinking enrollment, declining test scores, and what was viewed as an experienced instructional staff growing older yet unaware or resistant to further changes prompted by a diverse student population. In the first few years my staff and I spent much time in establishing a process by which the Board and community could determine in an orderly manner whether or not to close schools and, if schools were to close, which ones. By 1975, the decision-making process for school consolidation was in place and the death trauma from closing the first elementary school reverberated through the affluent portion of the County. By 1980, five elementary schools and two junior highs had been merged with nearby schools. Moreover, a secondary reorganization that moved the ninth grade to the high school and retained four intermediate schools (7th and 8th grades) had been approved by the School Board. The merger process appeared resilient enough to weather the controversy that erupted periodically over school closings.

The other task that consumed much time was creating an organizational framework for improving student performance. By 1976-1977, a framework for instructional improvement was put in place. The pieces to that framework were as follows:

.School Board established a set of instructional goals for system, e.g. improving reading, math, writing, and thinking skills; improving students understanding of humanities and human relations.

.Superintendent and staff established organizational devices for converting those goals into school and classroom priorities.

1. Each school staff, with advice from parents, drew up an Annual School Plan that concentrated upon the Board's goals.

2. Superintendent reviewed each School Plan, met with each principal at mid-year to discuss progress and make changes, and, at the end of the year, received an assessment of the plan.

3. Superintendent and principals discussed periodically the School Academic Profile which listed test scores and other student outcomes linked to the Board's goals.

4. Administrator and teacher evaluation forms and procedures were revised to incorporate the objectives of the Annual School Plan into each professional's formal evaluation

5. Curriculum objectives, kindergarten through twelfth grade in all subjects and skill areas were being revised to align them with one another and link them to School Board goals. Instructional materials, including textbooks, were reviewed and modified to make them connected to curriculum objectives. County-wide

> tests were constructed to assess the aims of the revised curriculum and to determine their fit with the materials in use. Analysis of test items missed on county-wide curriculum-based tests and national standardized achievement tests were completed and shared with principals and teachers annually to determine areas for improvement.

In short, a major effort over a three year period was made to tighten the generally loose linkages between system goals, district curriculum, school goals, texts and materials, tests, and normal evaluation procedures in order to concentrate the instructional staff's attention on fewer, worthwhile targets. In doing so, the School Board and I hoped that a positive climate toward academic improvement would be generated.

Test scores--the coin of the realm in Arlington--at the elementary level climbed consistently for seven straight years. Plateaus in achievement and some gains, but not many, were established at the junior and senior high schools, but progress was less evident. The staff identified for the School Board and community substantial gaps in academic achievement between minority and white students in 1978 and a beginning was made in trying to close those gaps. Other performance indicators such as numbers of students continuing their education, dropping out of school, County-wide tests, Scholastic Aptitude Tests also reflected well on the efforts of the teachers and administrators.

This reconstruction of the years since 1974 suggests that events and decisions involving the Board and Superintendent, flowed smoothly throughout the organization, falling neatly into their proper niches. Far from it. Unexpected events proved disruptive and complicating,often producing stumbles, pratfalls, and unexpected consequences. Consider, for example, how the transfer of a veteran principal from the mother high school in the district produced a political controversy that trailed the School Board and Superintendent for seven years leaving in its wake, a court suit, the election of one of the transferred principal's advocates to the County Board, and when the Republicans secured a majority on that Board, the appointment of that very principal,then retired, to the School Board.

Or consider the Governor of Virginia suing Arlington in 1976 for carrying on collective bargaining unconstitutionally since 1967. The Governor lost in the local court but, on appeal to the State Supreme Court, won. After a decade of bargaining and establishing personnel procedures with four different unions (including all administrators), the School Board found it now illegal to sit down with teacher or administrator representatives to negotiate salaries, working conditions,etc.

At the same time of the 1977 Virginia Supreme Court decision, a number of retrenchment measures forced onto the schools by the County Board, itself coping with a reduced flow of revenues, saw the School Board cut back personnel and programs. Reductions in teaching positions and specialist categories occurred throughout the 1970s. With 85% of the budget pinned down in salaries and inflation soaking up existing funds, teachers saw their salaries lag behind an unrelenting, spiraling cost of living. After the collapse of collective bargaining,teachers received a 2% salary increase that angered them as only a slap in the face could. The residue in resentment left from this 2% increase erupted in subsequent years with the union calling for a work-to-the-rule action and a majority vote of the membership asking for my resignation in 1979.

Take a volatile political setting where liberals and conservatives, Arlington-style, periodically switched control of County offices--often using the schools as a community punching bag. Add economic changes that yielded less revenues for County services. Mix in a different direction charted by the School Board and Superintendent that caused staff changes and concentration on different agenda items. What resulted made for flashy headlines, seven years of evening meetings marked by long hours, and a feisty climate for organizational change.

So much for the setting.

Schools and Classrooms

Turn now to the schools. There were 36 schools in 1975 (25 elementary, including one alternative; six junior highs and three senior high schools excluding two alternative secondary schools). Of the elementary schools six were completely open space and nine contained additions or substantial portions of the building that were open. Teachers were experienced (over half were at the top of a fifteen-step salary schedule) and highly educated (52% had a Masters or higher degree). Average class size ranged between 22-26 students at all school levels throughout the 1970s. Books, materials, and supplies were adequate; in some cases, abundant. Per pupil expenditure--a large proportion of which mirrored teacher salaries--rose from nearly $2000 in 1974 to $3000 in 1981. By that year, five elementary schools and two junior high schools had been closed, the two secondary alternative schools had been consolidated into one seventh through twelfth grade program, and a reorganization had pushed the ninth grade into the high schools leaving the former junior highs as two-grade intermediate schools.[16]

Professional acceptance of innovation and responsiveness to most school problems was high. A veteran Associate Superintendent of Instruction(1964-1980) had developed networks of teachers and administrators proud of and loyal to Arlington schools as a pacesetter. Under this leadership, the school district had either adopted or, at the least, considered numerous innovations throughout the 1960s, including team teaching, individually-prescribed instruction, computer-assisted instruction, new curricula (social studies, science, and math), alternative schools, open space, and, of course, informal education. No formal School Board or Superintendent mandate occurred to apply system-wide these new efforts. There was, however, an informal expectation that professionals were to be on top of whatever novel approaches were being tried elsewhere in the nation and investigate their appropriateness for Arlington. Like an archeological dig, traces of previous innovations could be seen at various strata within the entire organization when I became Superintendent in 1974.

So it was with open classrooms. In the June, 1969 issue of "Profile," a publication sent to all staff members, two of the five pages described the new "Learning Center Approach." Acknowledging that the "experiment" proved "exciting and creative" to teachers in Arlington and across the nation, a group of teachers at four elementary schools offered enthusiastic endorsement of the practice. Workshops had been held to train teachers in setting up centers, stocking them, and establishing management systems to track student performance in the centers. Already variations in the use of centers had emerged by 1968-1969.

> Some teachers prefer to have one or two centers for smaller groups while they work with a larger group.... There are those who prefer to have their students involved in learning centers for the entire class day while others will spend a portion of the day dealing with the entire class in a traditional manner and then allot the rest of the time for the students to pursue projects in the centers. 17

Tempering enthusiasm with caution, teachers recognized that "learning centers demand a great deal of work and creativity on the part of the teacher." Teachers who were interviewed saw the workload as "impossible without the help of teacher aides." Others were just skeptical. Bessie Nutt at Henry said:

> I'm still wondering in my own mind if this is a new trend in education or just another gimmick. Meanwhile, I am keeping an open mind and experimenting a bit. 18

At Jamestown where Carmen Wilkinson had begun opening up her class and space in 1966, three years later there were 50 fifth and sixth graders being team-taught by three teachers who jointly were responsible for eight learning centers in science, social studies, math and language. The three teachers spent a great deal of time arranging for materials in each center. All three said that they spent part of each weekend preparing materials and activities for the following week.

I cannot ascertain how widespread the use of learning centers were in Arlington—as an index of informal classrooms—in the early 1970s. Wilkinson, who traveled to various schools in the County to give workshops and had a steady stream of visitors to her classroom, estimated that two or three teachers in each building opened up their classrooms to various degrees. The Drew Elementary school, an alternative, introduced centers, nongraded primaries, and team teaching when it opened in 1971. By 1975, when I visited all of the elementary teachers at least once, I found about 25 teachers who used centers daily, permitted students to move freely, organized their instruction for small groups and individuals with some time set aside for large-group teaching, etc. That teachers who chose to establish centers in their rooms varied in their embrace of open classroom practices is evident from the quotes. That teachers could choose to do so in a climate of acceptance is also clear.[19]

Between 1975-1981, I informally observed, at least two or more times, 280 elementary classrooms, or about 40-50% of the teachers who served in those years. The results of those visits are displayed on the following Table with the results of my observations of 63 classrooms in two North Dakota cities.

Table 8. PATTERNS OF INSTRUCTION, ELEMENTARY, 1975-1981

	Teacher-Centered Instruction		Mixed		Student-Centered Instruction		Number of Classes	
	Arl. %	N.D. %	Arl. %	N.D. %	Arl. %	N.D. %	Arl.	N.D.
Classroom arrangement	42	43	18	30	39	27	(223)	(63)
Group instruction	49	62	50	25	1	13	(215)	(63)
Classroom talk	45	60	52	23	2	16	(215)	(63)
Student movement	60	37	0	0	40	63	(125)	(63)
Class activities	34	59	64	30	2	11	(213)	(63)
Classrooms with one or more centers.............					23	32	(209)	(63)
Classrooms observed in at at least two school years with one or more centers..					8	(NA)	(150)	

What is apparent in the County figures is considerable reliance, but not dominance, upon a teacher-centered configuration. Student-centered patterns registered substantially in two areas: arrangment of space and student movement. A Mixed pattern in instructional groupings (large, small, and individual), classroom talk and activities suggest higher levels in student participation. Just under one in four classrooms contained learning centers. On closer inspection of those classrooms with centers a half-dozen teachers used centers as an integral part of the instructional day. In most cases, the centers were used for enrichment, skill practice, or free choice activities before and after formally scheduled lessons, e.g. at the end of the reading period, before lunch, after recess,etc. I did track a dozen teachers (8%) who had centers when I visited classrooms during two different school years. Of all the teachers who had at least one center in the classroom, there was no consistent relationship between the presence of the centers and the kind of space the teacher taught in, i.e. open space or self-contained, except for one school where seven of the eleven classrooms had learning centers. The school had been built as open space but teachers had thrown up bookcases and temporary partitions to divide the space into self-contained rooms.

Examine the figures for the Grand Forks and Fargo teachers whom I observed briefly in 1981. While the percentages are not comparable in either sample size or duration of observation, the visits occurred in a similar time period and in settings that were much like Arlington in a number of areas: class size, history of responsiveness to innovations, experienced and highly-trained staffs.

What turns up in the comparison is the two-fold similarity in strength of teacher-centered instruction, albeit to a higher degree in the two North Dakota cities, and less presence of student-centered instruction, particularly in Arlington. Two student-centered categories, however, show surprising strength: classroom arrangment and student movement, quite similar to what occurred in Washington, D.C. classrooms (1967-1976) in the use of classroom space and New York City (1967-1976) for student mobility.

In visiting Arlington classrooms for nearly seven years I came to expect a number of regularities. Almost half of the teachers (43%) put up a daily schedule on the blackboard. If it were time for reading, the teachers would work with one group and assign the same seatwork or varied tasks to the rest of the class. If it were math, social studies, science, or language arts generally the teacher would work from a text with the entire class answering questions from it or either from ditto sheets or workbooks. These regularities in alloting time and grouping students were common except for those teachers who used learning centers, grouped more often in subjects other than reading, and assigned different tasks to different students.

High School

Shift now to the high school. In the early 1970s, Arlington was no different than many communities in experiencing the growing concerns expressed by students, teachers, and parents over the curriculum being unrelated to problems students faced, rules for maintaining school discipline that made seventeen year olds feel like two-year olds, and the lack of opportunity to do independent work both in and out of the school. The search for a type of education where students assumed responsibility for learning drove a small group of teachers and students at Wakefield High School to initiate experiments for a week where different classes were held and students could choose anything they wanted to study for the week. These experiments led to a drive for a separate alternative high school.[20]

A group of teachers and students at Wakefield designed a new school and presented it to the School Board. Concerns for the size of high schools, student decisionmaking, electives, and a variety of instructional practices produced a plan for a small (225 students) alternative high school open to any tenth to twelfth grader on the basis of a lottery. The School Board approved the venture and Woodlawn opened its doors in a reconverted, abandoned elementary school in 1971. Two years later an alternative junior high, prompted by similar impulses, was also endorsed by the School Board and placed in the former all-Black secondary school, Hoffman-Boston. In 1979, both schools were consolidated into one alternative secondary school, grades 7-12, called H-B Woodlawn with an enrollment of over 400 students and a waiting list of parents hoping to gain admission to the school.[21]

Similar to alternative schools elsewhere in the country that opened in the early 1970s, the governance of the school through a head teacher and a town meeting, its informality, small classes, and tolerance of differences marked the school clearly as unique in Arlington. Students and teachers were on a first-name basis; a first-floor bulletin board became an instant communication center with its notes, announcements, and pleas pinned to the wall; students designed elective courses with teachers; teachers developed internships in Arlington and Washington, D.C., including tutoring in nearby elementary schools. During the day, there was much student traffic in and out of the building to take courses unavailable at Woodlawn at other high schools, internships, and jobs.[22]

Teaching in such a school was different, according to Amos Houghton, a veteran teacher who volunteered to work in the Woodlawn program.

> Teaching here is infinitely more challenging than in the traditional school. I'm putting in more hours. I've never read so much in my life. But the ultimate reward is the depth in which you get to know the student personally in a school of 200 instead of 1600. Oh, I've had some adjusting to do. This is not a neat and tidy school. But I've been able to learn from my own son that this is not as important as a relaxed atmosphere....
>
> We don't have rules like hall passes that must be signed by a teacher for a student to leave the room. We've dropped the authoritative aspect in the teacher-student relationship and we find that kids are not tensed up, don't feel persecuted and are more amenable to our ideas.[23]

Discussions, student reports, lectures, independent study, textbooks, projects—all were used by various Woodlawn teachers. How different their classroom practices were from mainstream teachers is captured partially in the following Table.

Table 9. PATTERNS OF INSTRUCTION, HIGH SCHOOL AND H-B WOODLAWN, 1975-1981

	Teacher-Centered Instruction		Mixed		Student-Centered Instruction		Number of Classes	
	H.S. %	H-BW %	H.S. %	H-BW %	H.S. %	H-BW %	H.S.	H-BW
Class Arrangement	85	61	10	0	1	31	(91)	(11)
Group Instruction	94	36	6	45	0	18	(87)	(11)
Classroom Talk	72	33	27	33	1	33	(85)	(12)
Student Movement	96	27	1	0	2	73	(85)	(11)
Class Activities	72	25	26	42	0	33	(86)	(12)

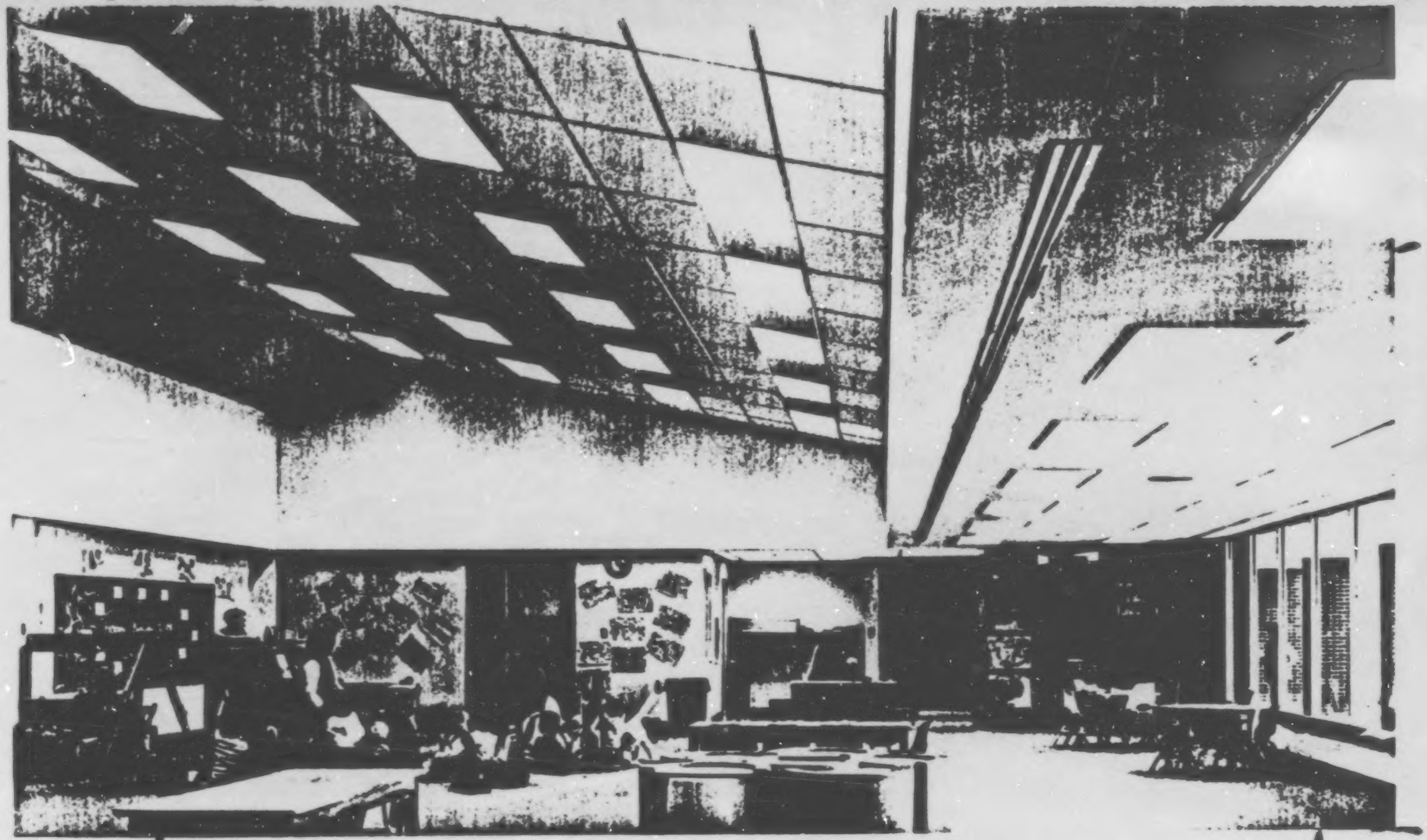
Regular high school teaching practices in Arlington resembled quite closely those of New York City and Washington,D.C. between 1967-1976. The niche that high school teaching occupies in Arlington matches the ones that I have described previously: rows of tablet-arm chairs facing a teacher who is talking, asking, listening to student answers, and supervising the entire class for most of the period--a time that is occasionally punctuated by a student report, a panel, and a film.

I sat in classes and listened to discussions, recitations, and, on occasion, student reports. I watched teachers send students to the chalkboard, use the overhead projector, give tests, and run movie projectors. What the teacher would probably do in any given high school class, I came to realize, was one of the very few hunches that I would risk betting on and have a decent chance of winning. The range and sequence of activities, I discovered, was predictable: teacher takes attendance; makes an assignment from the text; collects homework done from previous day; picks up a point from previous lesson or homework; questions students on points from the textbook or homework. Periodically, a film, a test, student reports, or a field trip would interrupt the above activities. The sequence of activities might differ from subject to subject, e.g. science labs or language tapes, assignment given at end of period rather than beginning, but the teacher activities listed above capture, I believe, about 90% of what teachers and students did in the classrooms that I observed. The universe of classroom tasks was a small one dominated by regularities that resembled planets orbiting the sun in a predictable manner.

As this study has shown, teaching repertoires in Arlington differed little from New York City and Washington,D.C. in the 1970s and looked considerably alike the teaching of colleagues a generation earlier across the country, allowing, of course, for exceptions.

One exception in Arlington was H-B Woodlawn, with half of the staff represented in Table 9. Practices were similar but there seemed to be more variety in the mix of techniques, particularly student participation, that turned up in classrooms. Mixed and student-centered patterns in each of the categories appear as frequently used alternatives to the familiar teacher-centered instruction.

Between 1974-1981 in Arlington, a middle-sized district undergoing substantial demographic changes under the aegis of a school board and superintendent that tried to steer a course of action targeted upon improving student performance, classroom teaching showed traits common to earlier periods when impulses for instructional reform weakened and slipped away. Forms of teacher-centered instruction dominated classrooms. The



Arlington, Virginia Elementary School, Glebe, 1976 (Public Information Office)

Washington-Lee High School, Math Class, Arlington, Virginia, 1975

Yorktown High School, Science Class, Arlington, Virginia, 1977 tediously familiar pattern of some variety in elementary teaching practice within a teacher-centered and mixed configuration narrowing into a pristine version of teacher-centeredness at the high school is apparent in Arlington.

Certain informal practices did penetrate elementary teacher repertoires producing, as described also in other settings, a hybrid form of informal teacher-centered practice. No such cross-fertilization seemed to have occurred at the high school level in Arlington, except for the occasional teacher in each building or at H-B Woodlawn.

National Data on Classroom Practice

Arlington is one school district. A fair question to pose is whether classroom practice in Arlington in the 1970s and early 1980s. was unique. Comparisons with 63 elementary classrooms in two North Dakota cities in 1981 suggest a general convergence in patterns, with the differences a matter of degree, rather than kind. There is some recent data that offer more points of comparison and contrast: two National Science Foundation(NSF) studies completed in 1978 and John Goodlad's large-scale "Study of Schooling" whose results have just begun to appear.

The NSF Case Studies in Science Education (CSSE) sent writers and researchers into eleven districts across the nation in 1976-1977. Concentrating upon science, math, and social studies programs in eleven high schools and their feeder schools, the field researchers constructed from interviews, documents, and observations richly-textured case studies of urban and rural, large and small, wealthy and poor, white and black schools. To corroborate the findings emerging from the case studies, NSF commissioned a survey of over 7000 teachers, principals, central office administrators, and state supervisors.[24]

No clear portrait of elementary classroom teaching breaks through the thick descriptions of the cases. The full range of teaching practice is described, sometimes in painstaking detail when the observer takes the reader through a class discussion that isn't going anywhere and tedium blankets the reader's eyes or, on occasion, when the prose about a gifted teacher wraps itself seductively around the reader and won't let go until the last paragraph.[25]

The mass of detail, however, overwhelms. Sorting out the details into regularities in instruction is difficult since frequency counts were beyond the scope of the writers' task and were alien to these case studies. Nonetheless, amidst the variety of practices the observers described some general patterns were evident in nine of the cases that included elementary schools. Principal investigator Robert Stake found in the eleven cases the teacher's centrality to all classroom activity. Moreover, the textbook was the primary authority of knowledge and math, science, and social studies; it was "presented as what experts had found to be true." While these patterns are evident in the vignettes that the authors sketched out, other instances of instruction were described that again reassert the variety that existed in the elementary school. Consider Mrs. B.[26]

Alan Peshkin watched a fourth grade social studies lesson in rural Illinois unfold before his eyes. Mrs. B. had tried learning centers in language arts and science but not yet in social studies, "I'm not ready yet," she said. The students were working in small groups when Mrs. B told them to return to their seats.

> "OK," she says, "now you've got to switch gears." Several students make a gear switching noise.
>
> T: Table two is ready. Robert's ready. Everybody's ready. OK, switch from measurement to talking about the globe. (She holds up a globe). This thing around the center of the earth is the equator. Is it really there?
>
> S: No.
>
> T: What does it split the earth into?

S: Hemispheres.

T: Which one are we in?

S: The western and northern both.

T: (Mrs. B. leaves her desk to pull down some maps) If you can't see come switch your chairs to the front. The maps here show the eastern and western hemisphere. Here's the equator. Right? OK, here is Antarctica. What hemisphere is Antarctica in?

S: South.

T: Yes, because it's below the equator. Another one?

S: Eastern.

S: Western.

T: Can everybody see the Indian Ocean? Who can tell me what hemisphere it's in?

S: Southern.

T: Yes, because it is below the equator. One more.

S: Eastern.

T: Is it below the equator?

S: Yes.

T: Yes, a little bit; just a smidge. Let's check out Africa. What hemisphere is it in, Jim?

S: Northern and southern and eastern....

T: I think you got this down well. There's a couple of questions on the worksheet about hemispheres. If the question is "N.A. is blank of S.A.," start with the second one. Remember. Save yourself a hassle. Do it the easy way. Start with with second one. If I said, "Africa is blank of Australia..."

S: South.

T: Good grief!

S: Run that one by again.

T:(Mrs. B. explains the point again; students return to their desks) If you're done before P.E., (Physical Education), you have fifteen minutes to find something quiet to do. Turn your worksheet in first. People, I think maps on the top of your page will help you more than anything else. (Many students go to Mrs. B. for help. She offers it willingly and patiently, re-explaining often what she explained in her general presentation) If you are not done, stick it in your desk and

> finish it after lunch. Get ready for P.E. (Afterwards, they return and Mrs. B. begins to talk about the unit on space that is part of language arts.)
>
> T: From your list of three choices I made up a list of people who will work on the different topics. Sometimes there is only one person on a topic. You might not want to work alone. I tried to give you your number one choice, but there's no more than three in a group. If you want to switch, this is your chance now.
>
> S: I'm on Mars. Can I change?
>
> T: Yes, if you want to. If you are satisfied with the group you're on, pass the list on to the next person....
>
> Students come to the rear table full of space books. A pair of girls get one book and go to the reading corner. Two boys come to find references on Cape Canaveral. Soon, the students are clustered in a tight knot at the table, searching for books that fit their topic....

Blends of teacher- and student-centered activities in Mrs. B's classroom underscore a variety of practice in daily instruction even when the prevailing pattern is teacher-centered and dependent upon textbooks.[27]

At the high school level, there is less ambiguity. Observer after observer, after mentioning the occasional superb math or science teacher who hooked students' attention and steered it elegantly for fifty minutes, commented on the fundamental likeness in teaching that cut across subject matter, size of class, teacher experience, or curricular group. A sampling from the cases makes this point.

. Rob Walker on the math department of Central High School (all names of schools are pseudonyms) in a Houston, Texas suburb:

> 'I am a very traditional teacher. I use a chalkboard, a textbook, and handouts.' If half the faculty did not say this precisely, they came close. I believe it is a fair representation of the faculty's pedagogical style....

. Mary Smith on Fall River High's science program in a small Colorado city:

> Introductory Biology-instructional methods are largely lectures, lab investigations, review sheets, and occasional films and guest speakers. The text used is from the Biological Sciences Curriculum Study (green version).
>
> Chemistry-the text Modern Chemistry is used but the approach is traditional. The vast majority of class time is spent in lectures and laboratory experiments.

. Louis Smith on science in Alte High School in a St. Louis suburb. He jotted down a number of statements that summarized what he saw "across schools, levels, disciplines, and departments:"

1. In most classrooms, a section of the blackboard with assignments for each day of the week;
2. Teachers' grade books literally full, cell by cell, of pages of numbers;
3. Teachers carrying a stack of laboratory notebooks home to be graded (in the evening) or into class to be returned (in the early morning before school);
4. Lab books full of red ink comments;
5. Frequent classroom byplay around the question, "Does it count?";
6. Reviews before tests, taking of quizzes and tests, returning and checking of tests.... [28]

If numbers appear infrequently in the volume of case studies, they are densely packed into every page of another NSF volume reporting the results of a 1977 national survey. Stratified for geography, socio-economic status, and other variables, almost 5000 questionnaires from teachers were returned for a response rate of 76%. Teachers reported their classroom techniques and manner of grouping students for instruction. In the following Tables I have selected those techniques that approximate the ones I have used throughout this study.[29]

Table 10. FREQUENCY* IN USE OF SELECTED MATH AND SCIENCE TECHNIQUES, 1977

	Math			Science			Social Studies		
Grade:	K-3	4-6	10-12	K-3	4-6	10-12	K-3	4-6	10-12
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Lecture	47	58	90	40	66	87	56	59	80
Discussion	86	88	87	76	90	89	88	91	95
Individual Assignment**	80	83	61	18	42	46	27	52	42
Teacher Demonstration	71	64	53	35	37	41	NA	NA	NA
Students at Blackboard	81	78	58	12	18	10	10	13	6
Tests or Quizzes	45	64	78	7	30	62	20	38	60
Students use Of lab materials and manipulatives	66	34	14	37	36	72	31	30	11
Student Reports or Projects	12	10	5	19	18	23	21	27	22
Sample number	(297)	(277)	(548)	(287)	(271)	(586)	(254)	(281)	(490)

---

* Frequency is defined as a technique reported by teachers to be used daily or at least once a week.

** "Teacher supervises students working on individual activities."[30]

A number of commonalities are obvious from the self-reports. First, lecture and discussion were favored methods throughout the grades, except for elementary math. Second, certain teacher practices increased in frequency as students moved through the grades into high school: lecture, discussion, tests and quizzes—except for high school science teachers' use of lab equipment. Third, classroom practices associated with student-centered classrooms such as student reports and projects, use of manipulatives and lab materials—either decreased as students got older (again, except for science) or did not reach beyond a reported 25% in use.

When the Table on instructional groupings reported by teachers is examined even more familiar patterns reassert themselves.

Table 11. AVERAGE PERCENT OF TIME SPENT IN VARIOUS INSTRUCTIONAL ARRANGMENTS BY SUBJECTS AND GRADE RANGE

	Math			Science			Social Studies		
	K-3	4-6	10-12	K-3	4-6	10-12	K-3	4-6	10-12
Entire class as group	36	38	54	52	52	52	59	50	68
Small groups	29	25	22	18	18	19	15	15	11
Students working individually	36	38	24	30	30	30	26	35	21
Sample Number	(293)	(271)	(539)	(272)	(262)	(576)	(254)	(281)	(453)

Teaching the entire class as a group increases in frequency in the higher grades, according to teacher responses, so that by high school, regardless of subject, over half of the class time is spent in whole-group instruction; teaching in small groups decreases in practice as the students move through the grades, except in science. This form of instructional grouping, however, did not exceed one-quarter of the time in the three subjects at all levels, except for K-3 math. Working individually is ambiguous since the question included answers of teachers who assigned the entire class the same task and students worked alone while the teacher supervised the work.[31]

Emerging, then, from a national cross-section of teachers' self-reports in 1977 are regularities in practice generally consistent with those in Arlington: teacher-centered patterns in total group instruction, classroom talk, and class activities converged with teacher self-reports of frequency in lecture-discussion and whole group instruction. Furthermore, the patterns of increasing teacher-centeredness as students move from elementary to high school converge. By "converge" I only suggest a similar path in both cases although percentages do differ and categories are not identical. How much to discount for the inflation built into teacher reports is another item that would have to be factored into a judgment of how closely the two sets of data overlap.

A final set of data come from John Goodlad's team of researchers who have been working since 1972 on "A Study of Schooling." A technical report of over 1000 elementary and secondary classroom observations in 38 schools across the nation, representing different regions, racial, socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds of students and school sizes was published in 1981. Although the study covered the goals of schools, parent and student views of what schools do, student expectations of the curriculum, and other issues, I will concentrate on the report that dealt with what teachers did in classrooms.[32]

Classroom data were elaborate. Trained observers did Five Minute Interactions (FMI), using an instrument to count the number of classroom events that occurred within five minutes, four times during a high school class and sixteen times daily in an elementary classroom. The target events were how teachers spent time on different tasks and exchanges between students and teacher: who is doing what to whom, how, and in what context. This offered a continuous picture of classroom exchanges. Another information pool came from Snapshot data. Brief, short descriptions were taken in each classroom to locate what activity was going on, who directed the activity and the form of grouping for the activity.[33]

From both sets of data on over 1000 elementary and secondary classrooms, Ken Sirotnik, who headed this portion of "A Study of Schooling," noted the following:

> .Approximately half of the time is devoted to teacher talk.... Relatively speaking, teachers 'out-talk' students by a ratio of about three to one.
>
> .The modal classroom configurations which we observed... looked like this: the teacher explaining/lecturing to the total class (or a single student), asking direct, factual-type questions or monitoring or observing students; the students 'listening' to the teacher or responding to teacher-initiated interaction.
>
> .The majority of students at all schooling levels--nearly two-thirds in elementary and three-fourths in secondary--work as a total class.... Less than 10% are found working in small group configurations.[34]

In examining Sirotnik's tables, a number of specific activities resembled closely those included in this study. For example, observers counted classes where there was a learning center. Of 129 elementary classrooms, 39% had at least one learning center. No explanation of how the centers were used appeared in the report, however. In one table of activities in elementary and high school classrooms, I chose a number of familiar classroom tasks already discussed at length in this report.[35]

Table 12. PERCENTAGE OF TIME TEACHERS USED SELECTED ACTIVITIES[36]

	Elementary	High School
Preparation for assignments or instructions; cleanup	12.1	13.2
Explain, lecture, read aloud	18.9	25.8
Discussion	6.8	5.2
work on written assignments	29.1	15.2
Taking tests or quizzes	2.6	5.6
TOTAL	69.5	65.0

For about two-thirds of each class, elementary and high school students spent their time in only five activities—ones generally labeled as teacher-centered. These figures are generally consistent with the 1977 NSF survey data which tallied teacher responses for frequently used techniques and the Arlington figures for regular high schools in the category "Class Activities." Percentages from "A Study of Schooling, however, exceed by a considerable margin Arlington's figures for these tasks. In comparing the various sets of data for another category—grouping for instruction--keep in mind that two of the data sets come from direct observation (albeit with vastly different instruments) and teacher-reports in dissimilar settings.

Table 13. FORMS OF INSTRUCTIONAL GROUPING*

	Entire Class		Small Group--Individual**	
	Elem. %	High School %	Elem. %	High School %
Study of Schooling	63	71	9	15
National Science Foundation Survey	48***	58	26	21
Arlington	49	94	1	0
North Dakota cities	62	(NA)	13	(NA)

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*All percentages are rounded off

**"A Study of Schooling" has a category "Medium/Large" group which accounts for the remainder.

***NSF separated math, science, and social studies. Percentages that I used are means for the three subjects.

Degrees of difference in the figures are apparent. Precision in this area is, simply stated, lacking. What remains significant, I believe, in the face of differing methodologies, settings, and research designs are the commonalities in grouping for instruction, i.e. entire class is frequently used and small group and individual, a much less common teaching practice. Frequencies vary for any number of reasons ranging from the nature of the data--survey and direct observation--to the instruments used or actual differences in classrooms.

No clear, unambiguous statement can be made about teaching practice but perhaps these monotonous, repetitive configurations that show up persistently nail down the notion that there is, indeed, a stubborn stability to certain teaching patterns. Numbers, of course, help in making the point. Narrative, however, may fill in gaps in the meaning that escapes decimals and percentages. So I end this chapter with the experience of Ellen Glanz.

Typical of that group of experienced teachers who work in suburban affluent, white districts, Glanz spent a year as a student in the high school in which she taught. In becoming a student she took her teacher perspective and tilted it by sitting behind a student's desk in class after class, facing teachers, her colleagues. Her one-year experience illuminates classroom instruction in an unusual manner.[37]

A social studies teacher for six years at Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School in Sudbury, a suburb twenty miles from Boston, Glanz proposed to her superintendent a project that would enable her to find out what it was like to be a student in high school. The superintendent gave her permission to take courses like any other student, provided the teacher, Glanz's colleague, agreed to her being in class. Glanz enrolled as a senior in 1978-1979. Her schedule included advanced expository writing, calculus, Russian history, advanced French, drawing, and trampoline.[38]

Successful in being accepted as a student after the novelty wore off, she attended classes, did homework, took tests, and, as she remarked with a touch of pride, she was even "kicked out of the library for talking." She kept a journal of her experiences and thoughts. Periodically, she met with teachers to share her observations and, by the end of the project, wrote two reports for the high school staff, parents, and students. Her observations from the perspective of a teacher-turned-student, pull together a number of points that both the text and tables made earlier.[39]

"I was curious to discover how different other teachers' classes were from those I attended as a child and a teenager." What she found out was that they "were not very different."

> Most teachers teach in much the same way they were taught--in an essentially didactic, teacher-centered mode.... The teacher knows the material and presents it to students, whose role is to 'absorb' it.

The system, she said, nurtures "incredible passivity." In class after class, "one sits and listens."

> In one class during my second week as a student, I noticed half way through the hour that much of the class was either doodling, fidgeting, or sleeping. Before long, I found my own mind wandering too.

Yet this teacher was touted as one of the finest in the school. "I realized," she said, "that what was boring was not what the teacher was saying but the very act of sitting and listening for the fourth hour in a row."[40]

When it comes to teaching methods, Glanz observed that most techniques teachers used "promote the feeling that students have little control over or responsibility for their own education." She pointed out the agenda for the class is the teacher's. He or she plans the tasks and determines who does what to whom, when. There is, she found, little opportunity for students to "make a real difference in the way a class goes, aside from their doing their homework or participating." She described how her English teacher surprised the class one period by letting two students lead a discussion. After some practice, "students were far more attentive and the teacher learned when and how to intervene to lead the discussion ... without taking control."[41]

After completing the year, writing the reports, and returning to her five classes a day, Glanz asked about the stubborn regularities in teaching approaches that she saw. "We must realize that in all liklihood, despite the problems I've described, classes will remain basically as they are right now." Why? Because subject matter—French, math, anatomy, history—"dictates an essentially didactic class model since the subject matter is not known intuitively by students and must be transmitted from teacher to student. And the ultimate authority and control will and should remain with the teacher."[42]

While Glanz suggests ways of improving teacher methods, involving students in classroom activities, and reducing the tensions that she saw clearly between the two separate worlds of teachers and students, it is apparent that she believes that the way it is in a high school can be improved but probably will stay much as it is because of what is taught, who has the knowledge, and where the authority rests. Glanz's description of her life as a student is similar to a number of other books and research efforts that put an adult into a high school for a limited amount of time. It is also consistent with the figures presented earlier. Her explanation, however, is an attempt to figure out why things are as they appeared to her. That task is now before me. Of the two questions I asked in the Introduction, I have answered the first one: how teachers taught. The second question on why teachers taught the way they did is answered in the next chapter.[43]

NOTES

[1] In 1966, Wilkinson asked whether her principal, Kitty Bouton, could secure a larger room for her effort to introduce informal teaching practices. Bouton received approval to have a wall knocked out thereby creating a large double room with ample space. Seeing it for the first time, according to Wilkinson, she exclaimed: "It's like a palace!" She told me that the word took on a negative meaning in the early 1970s. Interview with Carmen Wilkinson, March 22, 1982.

[2] *New York Times*, September 15, 1974.

[3] *New York Times*, April 20, 1975; *Opening Education*, 2, (Summer, 1975), p. 5.

[4] Ibid., p. 36.

[5] John Goodlad, et. al., *Looking Behind the Classroom Door*, (Worthington, Ohio: Charles Jones Publishing Co., 1974), pp. 78-79, 81.

[6] Ibid., pp. 82-83.

[7] Ibid., p. 97.

[8] Marilyn Suydam and Alan Osborne, *The Status of Pre-College Science, Mathematics, and Social Science Education, 1955-1975, Vol. 2, Mathematics Education*, (Columbus, Ohio: Center for Science and Mathematics Education, 1977), pp. 54-55.

[9] James P. Shaver, et. al., "An Interpretive Report on the Status of Pre-college Social Studies Education Based on Three NSF-Funded Studies," in National Science Foundation, *What Are The Needs in Pre-college Science, Mathematics, and Social Science Education?* (Washington: National Science Foundation, 1979), p. 7.

[10] Stanley Helgeson, et. al., *The Status of Pre-College Science, Mathematics, and Social Science Education, 1955-1975, Vol. 1. Science Education*, (Washington: National Science Foundation, 1977), pp. 31-32, 34.

[11] Louis Smith and Pat Keith, *Anatomy of an Educational Innovation*, (New York: John Wiley, 1971); Neal Gross, et. al., *Implementing Organizational Innovations*, (New York: Basic Books, 1971); Roland Barth, *Open Education and the American School*, (New York: Agathon Press, 1972). Also see Robert Herriot and Neal Gross (eds.) *The Dynamics of Planned Educational Change*, (Berkeley, California: McCutchan Publishing Co., 1979).

[12] It was, of course, these informal and frequent classroom observations over the seven years that produced the puzzling questions which prompted me to do this study. The research proposal that the National Institute of Education (NIE) approved in 1980 omitted Arlington as a site to study. It was after I left the post and began collecting data in Denver, Washington, New York City, and rural schools in the interwar decades and for the early 1970s that I saw the merit of examining a school district in the mid-to-late 1970s that had already experienced the surge of enthusiasm for informal education and open space. Because I had not included Arlington in the original proposal, I requested permission from NIE to add the district and they agreed. Thus, notes taken for one purpose were sifted to see how applicable they would be for another purpose. Most were; many were not.

To protect the confidentiality of the teachers I visited, no individual will be identified except for those who have consented after I left Arlington or have published articles themselves. The two teachers I described in the opening pages of this chapter, for example, agreed to be included by name. The data I present, then, will be aggregated by elementary and high school.

[13] Larry Cuban, "Shrinking Enrollment and Consolidation: Political and Organizational Impacts in Arlington, Virginia, 1973-1978," Education and Urban Society, 11, (May, 1979), pp. 367-395.

[14] Ibid., p. 368. Arlington closed its last all-Black elementary school in 1971. Drew Elementary became a county-wide alternative school. Students interested in attending the school that was advertised as using informal approaches were bussed to Drew. A number of slots were held for Black students in the Drew neighborhood.

[15] Without getting caught in the nuances of what "liberal" means in the context of Northern Virginia politics in the early 1970s, I used the word since it was the label the press attached to the coalition and was often used by members of the group itself.

[16] Arlington Public Schools, School News, January, 1980, n.p.

[17] Arlington County Public Schools, Profile, June, 1969, p. 3.

[18] Ibid., pp. 3-4.

[19] This estimate is taken from my notes written during my first year as Superintendent when I visited elementary classrooms. Interview with Carmen Wilkinson, March 22, 1982.

[20] Northern Virginia Sun, September 7, 1971; Washington Post, May 31, 1971.

[21] Superintendent Memorandum to School Board, "Status Report on Alternative Schools," June 15, 1979, p. 22.

[22] *Arlington Journal*, February 14, 1974; I visited Woodlawn numerous times and observed classrooms, listened to students, and, in general, was familiar with the details of the school and its ethos.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Robert E. Stake and Jack A. Easley, *Case Studies in Science Education*, Vol. 1, "The Case Reports."

[25] Ibid., 3-61, 62, 63, 64, 65.

[26] Ibid., "The Project," n.p.; pp. 3-90, 91.

[27] Ibid., pp. 4-52, 53.

[28] Ibid., p. 3-90.

[29] National Science Foundation, *Report of the 1977 National Survey of Science, Mathematics, and Social Studies Education*, (Washington: National Science Foundation, 1978).

[30] Ibid., pp. B-56, 57, 59, 60-61, 63-65, 67, 110.

[31] Ibid., p. 110.

[32] Kenneth A. Sirotnik, "What You See Is What You Get: A Summary of Observations in Over 1000 Elementary and Secondary Classrooms," Technical Report No. 29, (Los Angeles: Graduate School of Education, 1981).

[33] Ibid., pp. 2-5.

[34] Ibid., pp. 8, 10, 14.

[35] Ibid., Table 1, n.p.

[36] Ibid., Table 3, n.p.

[37] Ellen Glanz, "What Are *You* Doing Here?" (Washington: Council for Basic Education, 1979).

[38] Ibid., pp. 1-4.

[39] Ibid., p. 5.

[40] Ibid., pp. 12-13.

[41] Ibid., pp. 14-15.

[42] Ibid., pp. 25.

[43] See, for example, Philip Cusick, *Inside High School* (New York: Holt,Rinehart and Winston, 1973).

Chapter 6

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

> I must show the school as it really is.
> I must not attack the school, nor talk overmuch
> about what ought to be, but only about what is.
>
> Willard Waller, The Sociology of Teaching, preface

Remember the metaphor of the hurricane. Images of storm-tossed waves on the ocean surface, turbulent waters a fathom down and calm on the ocean floor lent themselves well to agitated squabbles over curricular theories and their limited influence upon courses of study, textbooks, and classroom instruction. In the years after reform impulses pumped different ideas and practices into public schools the metaphor helps to reveal the impossibility of generalizing about teaching behavior simply from the dominance of reform ideas and language in professional journals, popular magazines, and discourse among educators. Even crude classroom maps are better guides to practice than reformer intentions or rhetoric. Moreover, those maps revealed the limits of the metaphor since it wasn't calm on the ocean floor.

If anything, the last five chapters have charted some, but by no means all, features of the classroom terrain. I have collected data in five categories, embracing an important portion of visible teaching behaviors that educators label "instruction". Note, however, that these categories in no way equal the richness or complexity of classroom life. They do not capture the artistic elegance of those teachers whose subtle techniques can individualize instruction with the nod of a head, the wink of an eye, and a friendly arm around a shoulder. Or the abundant wealth in exchanges between students and teachers that produce a classroom culture complete with traditions to be honored, norms to be respected, and roles to be played. Thus, the study is limited in order to concentrate upon those practices teachers engage in regularly.

Drawn from a large number of varied sources in diverse settings over nearly a century, the data show striking convergence in outlining a stable core of teacher-centered instructional activities at the elementary school and, in high school classrooms, a remarkably pure and durable version of the same set of activities.

To the question--how did teachers teach?--answers can now draw from a substantial body of evidence, direct and contextual, from 1900 plainly showing what the central teaching tendency was and what variations of that dominant strain existed. Precision in methodology and sampling of historical sources were limited. However, the collection of almost 7000 different classroom accounts and results from studies in numerous settings,revealed the persistent occurrence of teacher-centered practices since the turn of the century--at the sizable risk of dulling a reader's sensibilities by presenting repeatedly similar patterns and numbers that flew like pigeons in and out of a roost. This historical inquiry into classroom instruction and the imprecise responses were in the spirit of one researcher who said, "far better an approximate answer to the right question, which is often vague than an exact answer to the question which can always be made precise."[1]

Previous chapters also disclosed that changes in teaching practices did, indeed, occur. Reforms left their signature on some classroom chalkboards. Some teachers, mostly elementary, created child-centered classrooms where students could move about freely to work in activity centers tied to their interests, where clustered desks made it easy for students to work together, and where planning by teacher and students about who would be doing what and when occurred daily. Subjects were correlated in these rooms and ample time was spent by students working in small groups and independently on projects.

Other teachers--a much larger number--chose certain student-centered practice to initiate for part of a day or once a week what they felt would benefit children and not unsettle existing classroom routines. Some began grouping students for certain periods a day; others established a science or reading center in a corner of the room. Some pulled desks into a circle or groups of four so that children could talk to one another as they worked; others chose a unit, say, on Indians, and tried to integrate many subjects into the three weeks spent on the project. These new practices, often implemented on a consciously selective, piecemeal basis, were incorporated slowly into the regular modes of instruction that typified the average day. Hence, practice altered.

The modification of teacher practices that produced hybrid forms of teacher-centeredness occurred in substantial numbers of elementary schools in the interwar years and since the late 1960s. Teachers chose particular student-centered approaches and blended them into their daily routines. By the 1980s, classrooms were far less formal places for children than a century earlier. Varied grouping procedures, learning centers, student mobility and certain kinds of noise were acceptable. But far fewer teachers had incorporated teacher-student planning of activities, determination of content, and allocation of class time into their lesson plan. Even less variation was apparent among high school teachers.

Why did these different patterns emerge? To ask "why" shoves a historian into pursuing causation. Unambiguous cause-effect relationships seldom march up to researchers and tap them on their shoulders. Moreover, because of some excesses in previous writings, historians have been leery of dealing openly with causes, substituting for the word such nouns as "factors," "influences," and "elements." Yet historians, in my judgment, cannot escape trying to explain what they have documented.

Let me state plainly what I mean by "why" since the word is slippery. To ask why the dominant form of instruction continued to be teacher-centered since the late nineteenth century and why hybrids of teacher-centered progressivism and informal education developed in elementary but less in high school classrooms, could produce a search to:

.seek out motives, i.e. of reformers, teachers, administrators,etc.

.lay blame, i.e. teachers resistant to change, penurious school boards,etc.

.justify the status quo, i.e. that's the way the system has been and it works,etc.

.understand why something developed.

This latter meaning of the word "why"--understanding the sources for continuity in teacher-centeredness and modest changes--is, I believe, essential knowledge that policymakers, scholars, and school officials need. This search for explanations is an inquiry into the determinants of classroom instruction, a search that, if successful, could produce reliable knowledge upon which informed improvement efforts could be built.

This exploratory effort to map and explain classroom instruction contains much imprecision in methodology. Nonetheless, there are criteria that would help to sort out some explanations from others. Obviously, given the data and its inevitable gaps, there is no one single, comprehensive, or final explanation. Explanations that would meet certain criteria would be, at best, suggestive and provide only further hypotheses for exploration. My criteria for selecting explanations are drawn directly from the patterns that emerged from the data:

1. The argument explains the pattern of teacher-centered instruction in both elementary and high school classrooms.
2. The argument answers why some instructional changes occurred at the elementary and not at the high school level.

3. The argument further explains why teachers selected particular progressive and informal practices, and not others.

These criteria exclude, for now, the possibility that there are separate explanations for separate questions which are also mutually exclusive. I exclude these possibilities now in the hope of initially finding simpler, parsimonious answers rather than complex ones. Yet these possibilities do exist.

Drawing from various sources, I have constructed five potential explanations. Each has a plausible ring in explaining the persistent stability in teaching practices. The danger of building weak arguments that could be later torn apart in order to present the correct one is inherent in this approach. I am aware of it and in building these possible explanations I have tried to avoid that device by distilling from the literature on stability and change in schooling those arguments and explanations that have been used and reshaping them to fit the more narrow issues of pedagogy raised in this study. Nonetheless, it remains a danger and I want to alert the reader to it.

POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS

Schooling as Social Control and Sorting

The school is the only public institution in the life of a growing child that stands between the family and the job market. The overriding purposes of the school, not always apparent but nonetheless evident, are to inculcate in children the prevailing social norms, values, and behaviors that will prepare them for participation in the larger culture. The structure of school life, what knowledge is highly valued, and what pedagogical practices occur, mirror the norms of the larger class and economic system. This explanation focuses largely upon schools being the primary mechanisms for social control, the sorting of diverse students into niches, and distributing the dominant cultural knowledge to the next generation.

Those teaching practices that seek obedience, uniformity, productivity, and other traits required for minimum participation in bureaucratic and industrial organizations are viewed as both necessary and worthwhile. In the primary grades, for example, work and play emerge as a distinct dichotomy with work considered more important by the teacher and play viewed as something to be done after tasks are completed. Work includes whatever the teacher directs children to do. Free-time activities are called play. Moreover, time to work is stressed. Tasks must begin and end when teachers say they do.Also work periods often involve every child working alone on the same task, at the same time. Thus, classrooms with those helper charts listing children's names with tasks to be done and daily schedules of activities that teachers place on blackboards reflect these points on work and time.

As the students grow older, homework, tests, grades, focus upon classroom competitiveness and productivity. Within this argument, certain teaching practices are functional: whole group instruction where waving hands vie for the teacher's attention; a question-answer format that rewards those better at factual recall; classroom furniture arranged to produce a uniform appearance; textbooks, a primary source of knowledge, yield reams of homework to which credit is given or withheld and becomes the basis for tests and quizzes. Dominant teaching practices, then, endure because they produce student behaviors consistent with the requirements of the larger society.

Especially, in the high school. The origins of the high school as a college preparatory institution serving a fraction of the population, capture both the social sorting and control functions precisely—according to this argument. College entrance requirements, Carnegie units, examinations, varied curricula mirroring future vocational choices channeled students into classes where knowledge and instruction are matched to vocation, e.g. business English, advanced placement English; physics and general science; calculus and consumer math. These external demands of university and marketplace shape most clearly the high school's structure and teaching yet plumb deeply into the junior high and upper elementary grades with the persistent press upon teachers to have their children up to grade level to be prepared for junior high and, in turn, for junior high teachers to have their students ready for the high school.

Progressive and informal education pedagogy, on the other hand, nourish individual choices, independent behavior, expressiveness, group learning skills, knowledge from many sources, joint student-teacher decision-making, and much student participation in both the verbal and physical life of the classroom. Such behaviors are outside the repertoire believed to be matched to the requirements of university and marketplace although they do describe certain behaviors characteristic of future professionals, managers, and executives. Such a fit helps to explain why progressive changes and open classrooms were often associated more with private schools and groups of upper-middle class, highly educated parents living in affluent areas than with public schools in white and blue-collar districts.

This argument about schools as mechanisms for social sorting and control explains the stability in pedagogical practices since the turn of the century.[2]

School and Classroom Structures

These organizational structures channeled teachers into adopting certain instructional strategies that varied little over time. By structure, I refer to the way school space is physically arranged; how content and students are organized into grade levels; how time is allotted to tasks; and how rules govern the behavior and performance of both adults and students. These structural configurations, the argument runs, derive from the primary impulses of public schooling: to get a batch of students to absorb certain knowledge and, in doing so, maintain orderliness.

The classroom organization, located within the larger school structure like a small Russian wooden doll nested within another larger one, is a crowded setting in which the teacher has to manage twenty-five to forty or more students of approximately the same age who spend—depending upon their age—anywhere from one to five hours daily in a space no larger than a luxurious master bedroom, involuntarily. Amidst continual exchanges with individual students and groups--up to 1000 a day in an elementary classroom, according to Jackson—the teacher is expected to maintain control, teach a prescribed content, capture student interest in the subject matter, vary levels of instruction according to student differences, and show tangible evidence that students have performed satisfactorily.

Within these overlapping school and classroom structures, teachers rationed their energy and time in order to cope with conflicting and multiple demands, constructed certain teaching practices that have emerged as resilient, simple, and efficient solutions in dealing with a large number of students in a small space for extended periods of time.

So, for example, rows of movable desks and seating charts permit the teacher, like Gulliver in Lilliput, easy surveillance and help to maintain order. The teacher's desk, usually located in a visually prominent part of the room near a chalkboard, underscores quietly who determines the direction for what the class will do each day. Class routines for students raising their hands to answer questions, to speak only when recognized by the teacher, and to speak when no one else is talking--the principle of turn-taking—establishes an orderly framework for instruction when it is delivered to groups. Students asking permission to go to the pencil sharpener or to leave the room reaffirm the teacher's control over student mobility and the imperative of orderliness.

Teaching the entire class as one time is simply an efficient and convenient use of the teacher's time—a most valuable and scarce resource--to cover the mandated content and to maintain control. Lecturing, question-answer format, recitation, seatwork, homework drawn from texts are direct, uncomplicated ways of transmitting knowledge and directions to groups. Given the constrictions placed upon the teacher by the daily school schedule, and the requirements that a course of study be completed by June, decisions that few teachers determine —the above instructional practices permit the teacher, in a timely and efficient manner, to determine whether students have absorbed the material.

Student-centered approaches in organizing space, instructing in small groups, correlating subject matter, encouraging expressiveness and student decision-making generate noise, movement, a less crisp view of teacher authority and make a shambles of routines geared to handling batches of students. These approaches appear out of sync with school and classroom structure and would seemingly require a complete overhaul of basic modes of classroom operation, placing the entire burden of change upon the shoulders of the teacher. It comes as little surprise, according to this explanation, that few teachers are willing to upset their intimate world for the uncertain benefits of a student-centered classroom.

This interpretation for regularities in instruction, drawn from a number of sources that I cite in the endnote, stresses how teachers coped with the demands of organizational structures, over which they had little control, by constructing solutions in the shape of classroom routines and teaching practices.[3]

The Culture of Teaching

A third explanation concentrates upon the occupational ethos of teaching that breeds conservativism and resistance to change in instructional practice. This conservativism, i.e. preference for stability and caution toward change, is rooted in the people recruited into the profession, how they are informally socialized, and the school culture of which teaching itself is a primary ingredient.

Persons attacted to the classroom seek contact with children, appreciate the flexible work schedule, and while acknowledging the limited financial rewards still embrace the service mission built into teaching. Entrants, according to this explanation, are usually young people already favorably disposed to schools, having been students for many years. Moreover, of the young who enter teaching women outnumber men, who often move out of the classroom in search of recognition, more influence and higher salaries. Attracted by work schedules that permit flexible arrangements with family obligations and vacations, the argument runs, women and men, for different reasons, invest little energy in altering occupational conditions. Recruitment, then, brings in people who tend to reaffirm, rather than challenge, the role of schools, thereby, tipping the balance toward stability, rather than change.

Even prior to formal entry to teaching via a brief training program, informal socialization has shaped newcomers' attitudes toward continuity. Consider that as public school students for twelve years (over 13,000 hours) entering teachers were in close contact with their teachers. Teaching is one of the few occupations where one learns first-hand about the job while sitting a few yards away, year after year. Teachers intuitively absorbed lessons of how to teach as they watched. Within this explanation, the familiar assertion is heard that teachers teach as they were taught.

Similarly, the act of teaching presses toward preserving what is. The first-year teacher, after a brief apprenticeship, is thrust into the classroom with the same responsibilities as a twenty-year veteran. The private anguish of a sink-or-swim ordeal which usually consumes the first few years of the neophyte is alleviated by occasional advice and sharing of folklore from experienced colleagues. From the very first day, facing the complicated process of establishing routines that will permit a group of students to behave in an orderly way while the subject matter is taught, the teacher is driven to use those practices that he or she remembered were used or take the counsel of veterans who advised their use. Experienced colleagues may help informally and, in doing so, entrants absorb through a subtle osmosis the norms and expectations of the school and what it takes to survive as a teacher. The folklore, occupational gimmicks, norms, and daily teaching reinforce what is rather than nourish skepticism, especially if one wishes to persist in the profession.

Thus, classroom practices tend to be stable over time. After all, homework assignments, discussion, seatwork, tests, an occasional film to interrupt the routine were all methods familiar to newcomers in their own schooling and, more often than not, seemed to keep the class moving along. To use them in their own classrooms would be preserving what some exemplary teachers and esteemed college instructors had used. Rather than making fundamental changes--such as teaching in small groups, integrating varied content into units, planning lessons with students, and letting class members choose what to do--tinkering with methods, polishing up techniques, introducing variations of existing ones would be consistent with the basic conservatism, according to this explanation, that is bred by the occupation.[4]

Beliefs: Individual and Shared

The ideas teachers hold about the purposes of the school, how children develop, the role of subject matter in instruction, how classroom space should be organized, and the exercise of authority determine teaching practices. This explanation stresses that nineteenth century ideas of child-centered instruction, implemented by practitioners such as Sheldon, Parker, Dewey, and others, reached a popular audience in the twentieth century,after academics and writers wrote journal and newspaper articles. Growing numbers of teachers, particularly at the elementary level, put these ideas to work in classrooms. The Eight Year Study and other experiments are instances of the spread of these ideas at the secondary level.[5]

The teacher who believes that children working together in small groups can teach one another much of what he or she wishes to convey, will organize classroom furniture differently than a teacher who views learning as a filling-up process. Also the teacher who conceives of block-building as an exercise to develop large muscles in five year olds will plan for that task differently than one who views it simply as another play activity. Finally, the teacher who looks for connections between textbook content and daily events because he or she believes that knowledge related to a context will be learned by students, will depart from the text far more often than others to explore these connections. Coverage of subject matter will be sacrificed in a trade-off that offers students a larger grasp of deeper understandings than dates, numbers, or similar facts could convey.

Among teachers, however, other ideas are far more deeply embedded. Knowledge must be transmitted to young people; the role of the school is to develop the mind and instill social values; students learn best in well-managed, noiseless classrooms where limits are made plain, academic rigor is prized, and where rules are equitably enforced by the teacher; and the teacher's authority, rooted in institutional legitimacy and knowledge, must be paid respectful attention. These, and similar beliefs, are held by most teachers, especially in high schools. They account for the perserverance in such teaching practices as reliance upon textbooks, little student movement, and a concern for tranquil classrooms marked by the "hum of knowledge." The familiar dichotomy of teaching-children-a-subject or teaching-a-subject-to-children captures a substantial piece of these belief systems.[7]

Beliefs, then, shape what teachers choose to do in their classrooms and explain the core of instructional practices that have endured over time.[8]

Feckless Implementation

A core of teaching approaches endured because reform efforts to alter those approaches were ineffectually executed. Had thoughtful, systematic, and comprehensive efforts been undertaken to implement instructional changes, the argument runs, far more progressive and informal educational practices would be apparent in the 1980s.

Except for Denver and New York in the 1930s, few school districts developed conscious strategies that would put into practice new ideas about teaching. Where classroom reforms were adopted, invariably, they stemmed from a decision made at the top administrative level. Implementation was given little thought beyond a batch of directives being sent out and briefings for principals and teachers, according to this argument.

Indeed, seldom were teachers directly or formally involved in planning or determining the conditions for implementation except, again, in Denver in the interwar years which still remains unique among school districts. In most instances, formal endorsement occurred but there were few organized efforts to put into classrooms progressive or open classroom approaches, e.g. Child Development Program in 1938 (Washington,D.C.); expansion of the

Activity Program in 1941 (New York City); also in the same year, Denver's decision to mandate General Education courses, results of the Eight Year Study, in all high schools; open classrooms in Fargo and Grand Forks (North Dakota) in the 1970s.

A laissez-faire, free market approach marked the posture of middle-sized and large school systems after the superintendent and school board embraced instructional reforms. A dogma-eat-dogma, Darwinian world where reforms struggled among themselves for survival, often characterized school districts. Individual advocates or bands of partisans for a special change would fight doggedly for a niche, i.e. resources to last a couple of years. If successful, the district grapevine and sporadic contacts with like-minded professionals and parents would spread word of the change. Perhaps, if conditions were just right, formal notice of the successful reform by a top administrator, superintendent, or board of education would lead to its expansion. Serendipity more than plan, would explain expansion. Absent, more often than not, were administrative mechanisms to disperse information, organizational linkages between school practices and district-wide goals, and teacher participation in the process.

Student-centered approaches, then, infrequently penetrated classrooms because of the unwillingness or incapacity of school officials to convert a policy decision or formal approval of an instructional change into a process that would gain teacher support for classroom adoption. The explanation contains within it the adage implementors are fond of using: It was a terrific idea; it is a shame that it wasn't ever tried. The explanation also suggests that the very adoption of the innovation without subsequent organizational effort may have even strengthened the stability of existing practices by spreading the illusion of classroom change.[9]

All of these arguments hurdle the first criterion of explaining the durability of teacher-centered instruction in elementary and high school classrooms. In meeting the other two criteria, however, dropouts occur. The lack of effective implementation, for example, explains why so few changes in teaching practice did penetrate classrooms except in New York City and Denver during the 1930s when concerted organizational efforts were undertaken. But the argument fails to account for why student-centered practices occurred among grade-school teachers and hardly spread among high school staff.Nor does the interpretation account for teacher selectivity in implementing some approaches but not others.

Similarly, the argument of a teacher culture explains nicely the durability of a core of teaching practices. It accounts for high school classrooms especially retaining the look, smell, and activities of classrooms of previous generations. But its elasticity is limited. Evidence that teachers, singly and in groups, did establish student-centered classrooms in various places in both time periods when progressive and open classroom methods were in vogue reveals that large numbers of teachers, while shaped by that occupational culture did break away from its confining traits. Nor does the argument help in understanding why hybrids of approaches developed among teachers.

The same problems afflict the social control and sorting argument. Its power is rooted in connecting the larger culture and social structure to the mundane activities that teachers carry out daily in their classrooms. Partially, it even helps to explain the organizational structures that were established in schools, i.e. grade levels, time schedules, curricular tracks, one teacher for thirty students,etc. Stability in pedagogical practices have social meaning--they are not simply artifacts independently created, detached from a context. Yet the distinctions in amount of change between levels of schooling and teacher-centered versions of progressivism and open classroom practices that emerge from the data are missing from this argument. Finally, there is the larger, more substantial issue accompanying any social control and sorting explanation for phenomena: latent functions. That is, what teachers do in their classrooms is only a surface reality for it masks the underlying actual functions that are the true purposes of the institution, i.e. social control and sorting of students into economic niches.

This may be true, although it borders on the impossible to prove what are asserted as latent functions are, indeed, the real purposes. The best that could occur, I believe, is a correlation between evidence and the assertion that, for example, the teacher's domination of classroom talk is a means of reproducing the larger social order's power relationships and hierarchial control mechanisms.[10]

Individual beliefs as an explanation, is more robust because it carries with it implicitly the notion of potential teacher change. Beliefs are learned. They can be dropped, learned anew, integrated with others into a unique synthesis. Changes in ideas occur slowly. Hence, changes in teacher practice follow shifts in belief patterns among teachers. This argument hurdles two of the criteria: it accounts for durability because of entrenched beliefs concerning what was appropriate teaching dating back to the late nineteenth century; it accounts for some teachers changing their beliefs and embracing new ones.

The argument explains why teachers may have picked and chosen among pedagogical practices since beliefs may be accepted partially at first and then wholly as classroom experience meshes with belief. Classrooms are unforgiving crucibles for testing out ideas. A few meet the rigors of daily instruction fully; some have partial merit, while others are discarded onto the ideological debris that surrounds public schooling. But the explanation fails to clarify why more student-centered pedagogy turned up in elementary rather than high schools.

What teacher beliefs lack in an explanation, the argument of school and classroom structures supplies a missing piece. The suggestion that organizational structures shape practice assumes that elementary and high schools are similar in structure but not identical. Where the two organizations differ markedly is in complexity of content students face in classrooms, allocation of time to instruction and external arrangements imposed upon upon high schools from other institutions.

Children in elementary grades learn fundamental verbal, writing, reading, and math skills. Content is secondary and often used as a flexible vehicle for getting at those skills. Subject matter is relatively unimportant, especially in the lower grades. But in the last year or so of elementary school, and certainly in the secondary school, not only are more sophisticated skills required of students but these skills are hooked directly into complex subject matter that in and of itself must be learned. Literary criticism, historical analysis, solving advanced math problems, quantatitive analysis in chemistry all require knowledge of complicated facts and their applications. High school teachers will remain didactic in methods because subject matter drives methodology in the classroom, according to Ellen Glantz who spent a year as a student in her high school.[11] Far weaker an impulse is subject matter in elementary grades.

Also in elementary schools, student and teacher contact time differ sharply with the high school.The self-contained classroom remains the dominant form of delivering instruction. Generally, teachers spend five or more hours with the same thirty or more students. They see far more of a child's strengths, limitations, capacities, and achievements than a high school teacher who sees five groups of thirty students less than an hour a day. In terms of simple contact, the elementary teacher sees a class of thirty children nearly a 1000 hours a school year; a high school teacher sees any one class(of the five he or she teaches) at most, 200 hours during the year or about one-fifth of the time that elementary colleagues spend with pupils. Contact time becomes an important variable in considering issues of grouping, providing individual attention, varying classroom tasks and activities, and rearranging furniture. In elementary schools, the potential to make changes in these and other areas is present just because the teacher has more contact time with the same children; such potential is absent for 25 students within a fifty-minute period. Whether such changes occur in the lower grades, is, of course, an entirely separate issue, but the structural difference in time allocation allows for possible changes in elementary classrooms.[12]

Finally, in elementary classrooms, especially in the primary grades but still apparent in the upper three grades (4-6), external pressures from accrediting associations, college entrance requirements, and vocational choices are missing. In the high school classroom, strong pressures derive from Carnegie units, College Boards, Scholastic Aptitude tests, Advanced Placement, certifying agencies and other external constraints that push teachers to complete the textbook by June, that drive students to prepare for exams, seek jobs, and take the proper courses for graduation. While similar pressures exist in elementary grades, particularly the press to get children ready for the next grade, the pressures seldom pinch as they do in the higher grades. More slack time is available in elementary schools. Flexible arrangements are more evident. Grades can be combined; groups within a class can include a range of ages and performance.

Retaining a student for another year, while uncommon, occurs more frequently in elementary than in high schools. These three structural differences--emphasis on subject matter, contact time, and external pressures--may well account for why changes occurred with some frequency in elementary schools and much less so in high schools.

If this argument meets the criteria and, also explains teacher-centered instruction as a series of teacher-designed solutions to cope with school and classroom structures within which they labored, then there is still the last hurdle of explaining why teachers selected certain student-centered practices and not others. Here this argument falls short. It does not offer a plausible reason for why those teachers who embraced new practices chose ones that produced hybrids of teacher-centered open classrooms and progressivism, e.g. classroom rearrangments, more student movement, learning centers, projects, and varied groupings wedded to teacher-centered approaches.

None of the explanations meets all three criteria. From the diverse arguments, bits and pieces touch upon various facets, capturing a highlight here and a significant theme there. Any sculptor could carve from these five perspectives a number of reasonably coherent explanations that would meet all three criteria. I will construct a hypothesis--acknowledging again that it would be one of many possibilities--that I believe explains why teacher-centered instruction perservered; why elementary classrooms changed more than those in high schools; and why mixed versions of progressivism and informal education have developed.

An Hypothesis

My explanation is midway between speculation and a conclusion. It is more informed than a guess,but it falls short of being a confident assertion. Why I chose this configuration of arguments rather than another set is because it met the three criteria, and rang true to my quarter-century experience as a teacher and administrator. My experience--a fourth criterion--acted as a sieve. All of the findings that have been extracted from the data fit this hypothesis in a satisfying manner, given my experiences.

The school and classroom structures, I believe, established the boundaries within which individual teacher beliefs and an occupational ethos worked their influences in shaping pedagogy. Intertwined as these two influences are, disentangling each and assigning a relative weight to the influence of each, I found virtually impossible to do. The constraints, pressures, and channeling that the school and classroom contexts generate is the invisible, encompassing environment that few recognize as potentially shaping what teachers do daily in classrooms. How difficult it is to analyze the commonplaces--that which is seen daily and taken for granted as organic, unchanging, brick-hard features of the environment. Seymour Sarason, in an attempt to see the school differently, used the device of a visitor from outer space asking basic questions about school structure. Imagination is required. For example, to envision a voluntary tutorial with a student meeting daily in the teacher's living room contrasted with an eighth grade U.S. History class of thirty students in a school of 1500 students is to see starkly the different environments, stripped of non-essentials. How tutor/student and teacher/class define instruction and learning suggests the overriding importance of organizational structures. Coping with these structures, teachers invented pedagogical solutions that have proved workable in maintaining control while carrying out instruction.[13]

Within this organizational framework, the culture of teaching, itself shaped by structural arrangments--further channels both newcomers and veterans into teaching regularities that folk wisdom reinforce as essentials for classroom survival. Teachers copying mentors and former teachers was not wholly a knee-jerk, unthinking reaction but was also a realistic appraisal of what teaching approaches were necessary to survive the year.

What leavens the deterministic drift of this argument is the potential for change associated with teacher beliefs. Certainly, the larger social milieu shaped belief systems. Moreover, organizational imperatives influenced what people thought. Yet different ideas about children's development, how they learn, and purposes for schooling beyond cultivating minds, permeated the larger culture and penetrated educators' thinking since the turn of the century. Child-rearing manuals were influenced by developments in psychology. Radio programs, films, and magazines touted the New Education. Both helped shape different attitudes toward children and schools. Too often one forgets that while parents and citizens absorbed these ideas, teachers—as parents—and in their professional roles did also. Ideas once embraced are not easily let go. You cannot unring a bell.

What intrigued me continually as I worked through the data was the recurring phenomenom of veteran elementary teachers, many of whom had taught for more than a decade,were,for the first time, creating centers, different seating arrangements, projects, varied groupings,etc. Leona Helmick in rural Michigan (1937), Mrs. Spencer (1924) and Gloria Channon (1969) in New York City, Carmen Wilkinson (1981) in Arlington, and others who were often trained in conventional approaches and socialized by years in the classroom, still adopted, partially or wholly, another perspective of teaching. Generally, a small number of teachers in a district and mostly in elementary schools, these were the teachers who persisted in maintaining the alterations they made to their classes long after the initial enthusiasm for the activity method, projects, learning centers, and open classrooms faded and colleagues returned to their familiar practices. Although these teachers were few, for any number of reasons, they already had developed over time, beliefs different from their fellow teachers about how children learn and what classrooms should be. Within the organizational structure of the elementary school, where heavy external pressures were less evident, larger blocks of time were available, and skills were stressed more than content, pedagogical practices could flow more easily from these ideas. Researchers might explore this phenomenon since it suggests renewed attention upon experienced teachers who already control their classrooms yet wish to try out different approaches. Were there substance to this idea, it would question a current notion that experienced teachers hold unchanging, entrenched beliefs and attention should be paid to new (or young) teachers as candidates for classroom innovators.

This argument, one of a number that could have been constructed, offers an explanation that accounts for both stability and change in teaching practice, although the tilt is decidedly toward continuity. More important, I believe, it suggests that teachers had some, but not a great deal of, autonomy to make classroom choices derived from their belief systems. The margin of choice, exploited to its fullest by a small number of teachers, however, was quite slim.

The issue of teacher autonomy weaves covertly in and out of any hypothesis about classroom change. Of the five explanations, two suggested that teachers were gatekeepers of reform practice and freely chose what they would do in their rooms. The implementation argument assumed that if certain organizational mechanisms were in place, teachers would have been either coerced by formal authority, or persuaded by incentives of the virtues in certain instructional changes. The other argument focused upon teacher beliefs which could change were teachers exposed to different ideas about children and learning. Within the other explanations, the degree of teacher freedom to alter what is done in classrooms is diminished greatly by either adaptations to the larger social structure outside of the school or the professional culture itself.

Thus, blaming the teacher for resisting instructional changes-"teacher-bashing," as the British label this line of argument—is a common response to the tenacity of teacher-centeredness. Such a response assumes that most teachers were free to adopt changes, if they merely chose to. When they did not, it was because they were obstinate or fearful of classroom consequences. Teacher-centered instruction became an artifact of stubbornness or fear.[14] Yet consider what basic decisions directly affecting instruction were sealed off for decades from teachers:

1. How many and which students should be in the class?
2. Which students should leave the class because they are not profiting from instruction?
3. What extra instructional help will students get?
4. How long should the school day or class period be?
5. Should teachers have planning time in the daily schedule and, if so, when?
6. What texts will be used for each subject?
7. What grades or subjects will each teacher teach?
8. What should be the format and content of the report card?
9. What standardized tests will be given?
10. What content will the teacher teach?

The results of these decisions, nested in a structure outside the classroom, established the context for what teachers did in their classrooms.

The point here is to differentiate between contextual decisions affecting instruction over which teachers have had little influence from those classroom decisions that teachers could, indeed, shape:

.how the classroom space and furniture is arranged, (once portable furniture was installed in rooms)

.how students should be grouped for instruction,

.who should talk and under what circumstances,

.to what degree and under what circumstances, should students participate in classroom activities,

.what tasks are most appropriate to get students to learn what is expected.

Teachers decided each of these issues; their decisions constituted the margin of change available to them. Yet these decisions could not escape the influence of the twin impulses pumped into the classroom from the outside: teachers must maintain order in their classrooms and get students to learn.

The issue of how much autonomy teachers had over school and classroom decisions is fundamental to any analysis of instruction since what policy-makers and school administrators assume teachers can and cannot do is often built into decisions touching classrooms. Is the teacher a captive of processes that inexorably shape what happens in classrooms? Is the teacher a leader who determines what needs to be done within the classroom and does it? Or is the teacher in the classroom an incredibly complex mix of captive and leader that is contingent upon both circumstances and time? The hypothesis I offered stressed that structural and cultural influences were sufficiently potent to maintain teacher-centered practices, especially in high schools. In classrooms, teachers had partial autonomy. A narrow margin of opportunity for change existed—more in elementary than in high schools. The freedom to alter the classroom and exploit that margin increased in those teachers who, for any number of reasons, embraced different beliefs about children, learning, and what schools should do. They believed that those ideas could be introduced to their classrooms and forged ahead in a trial-and-error fashion.

Far more stability than change, my argument goes, characterized classroom instruction. Change did occur, mostly at the elementary level, and far less in high schools,but it was limited to certain areas. What I have yet to explain is why hybrids of teacher-centered progressivism and informal education appeared.

Recall that more informality in seating and student movement developed in elementary classrooms over the years. Varied groupings showed up; teachers divided classes into two or three groups for reading, math, or other activities..Individual attention from the teacher increased somewhat. Activity centers and projects were embraced by substantial numbers of teachers in one generation and learning centers by a later one. Why these areas were selected, initiated, and installed by growing numbers of teachers (far from a majority, however) and not student-teacher planning of content, alloting of time during the day, and choice of activities, is a question that I now turn to.

Why did these hybrids develop?

This question can be split apart: why did teachers who chose to introduce new techniques limit what they selected? Why did teachers choose the particular student-centered approaches that mark these hybrids?

To answer these questions, I need to divide teachers since 1900 into three general groups. First, the largest group and numerical majority including well over 90% of high school teachers, contained teachers who chose to continue instruction in a manner to which they were accustomed--or, as I have argued, were shaped by organizational structures and occupational culture. A second, and considerable group of teachers, probably up to one-quarter of the teacher population--accepted many of the ideas but tried out only a few, limiting themselves to particular techniques. Finally, there were a tiny fraction of teachers in a group, probably in the 5%-

10% range and concentrated in elementary schools, who believed in progressivism and informal education. They introduced as faithful a replica of those ideas as they could that was tailored to their classrooms and the available resources. These last two groups, I estimate added up to at least one-third of all teachers, again, drawn mostly from elementary schools. From these teachers mixed versions of progressivism and open classrooms developed. And for these teachers, the two questions I ask are applicable.

Why did teachers limit their choices to certain student-centered practices? Two reasons, I believe, dulled the appetites of teachers for classroom change: the personal cost in time and energy and the lack of help to put complex ideas into practice.

Begin with teacher-centered instruction. What most teachers do ordinarily requires a major investment of time and emotional, if not physical, energy.Consider planning what content to cover and how to carry it off; doing it amidst unexpected events; interacting with children continually while teaching; making hundreds of small decisions daily while in front of the class; marking papers; handling disputes between children--and a dozen other activities. These spell the difference between maintaining an orderly room. To incorporate student-centered practices and begin revising the customary role of teacher expands the personal investment of time, energy, and effort.

Take supplying the class with varied materials in order to match up students' interests and performance level with classroom tasks. To do so, requires teachers to find new materials in the school or district and, if not available, then elsewhere.Otherwise, teachers make the materials themselves. Recall rural Vermont teacher,Mary Stapleton and to what lengths she went in her classroom in 1932 to individualize instructional materials similar to what she heard about in Winnetka. Or imagine how much work goes into starting learning centers for the first time, much less the continuing work to periodically change them. Or consider the emotional energy and managerial skills that go into operating a class where children move about doing many varied tasks simultaneously while the teacher listens to a child or speaks to a small group.

Monitoring what children are doing, what skills they need to work on, and resolving unexpected problems as they arise demands the teacher's additional investment in radar equipment, if not an intensive management course. Students deciding on classroom rules, content to be studied, or similar areas require of the teacher certain skills and more patience in anticipating, responding, revising, and accepting diverse noises and student activity than they had been used to.

The initial five chapters contained many examples of different stages in classroom student-centeredness. Such changes in conventions and classroom traditions imposed a direct, unrelenting obligation upon the teacher to invest far more time and effort beyond what teacher-centered colleagues invested. If there is any persistent theme in what teachers have said about opening up their classrooms or introducing progressive practices, it is that far more is expected of the teacher. Afternoons and evenings are often spent in preparing materials and marking papers. Coming to school early in the morning before the children arrive in order to rearrange centers and set up activities for the day was common among such teachers. Arlington's Carmen Wilkinson, with over thirty years experience, told me:

> We have a lot of work. The curriculum is overloaded and we have so many assessments to do. So much paperwork. Yet I teach Spanish in the first grade. That's not in the curriculum. Every other Friday, we cook. That's not in the curriculum. But I feel that they need these extras. Teachers need to expand their own thinking and their own creative ideas.

Anyone reading even a small portion of teacher accounts describing what they have done in their classrooms would come away impressed with the amount of work that had to be done to alter practice.

Help was necessary. Help was needed in the shape of another pair of hands, another person to work with individuals and small groups, grade papers, prepare seatwork,etc. Help was needed in developing materials and building centers; how-to sessions in managing students engaged in six different classroom tasks; how to distinguish between instructional and disruptive noise, cope with distractions, and help pupils work through decisions. Help was needed in providing time for teachers to talk, plan, and work through some of the thornier classroom issues of control, management, implementing curriculum, risking one's self in trying something new, etc. Many student-centered classrooms in the 1970s had student-teachers, aides, parent volunteers to help in open classrooms. The Innovation Team (Washington, D.C.), the New School's support team (North Dakota), Workshop Center for Open Education (New York City) are instances of the awareness that teachers lacked the resources to do it all by themselves and needed technical assistance.

Most teachers who endorsed progressive and informal educational ideas lacked access to that kind of aid or already felt overloaded with existing classroom demands. In a sink-or-swim fashion, most teachers who ventured into progressive and informal practices had to learn these skills by themselves, from like-minded colleagues either in school or elsewhere from books, summer courses, etc. Dorothy Boroughs, the P.S. 198 fourth grade teacher in 1970-1971 took a course in open classrooms, visited a school where two teachers had opened their classrooms without any outside help, and had even placed a math center in one corner of the room. Yet, as the article pointed out, doing all she had to do to keep abreast of her students, school requirements, and her expectations of what was necessary to get her class to read on grade level left her little time and few emotional resources to pursue actively changes in her classroom.

All of this is to say that what is required involves far more rethinking of daily classroom events, what materials must be secured,how to spend time, and what children are to do for those teachers who wish to adopt student-centered practices. The time and effort burden falls directly and solely upon the teacher's shoulders. What clear and consistent yield could teachers count upon for their students and themselves from the additional exertion? What organizational recognition and incentives were there to increase the amount of work taken home and periodic rearrangement of the classroom? What problems with students, other colleagues, and school administrators might occur as a result of classroom changes? Are the inner rewards worth the tradeoff in potential problems and additional work? No crisp, unambiguous answers existed to these questions. This is why, I believe, teachers in the second group restricted their embrace of student-centered approaches to just a few.

Between 1900-1980, why did a substantial number of teachers rearrange classroom space and furniture, permit more student movement, develop projects and learning centers, and use varied groupings as the preferred student-centered approaches? Partisans of child-centered schools two generations ago and open classrooms a decade ago might wince at these artifacts of reform. Informality in student-teacher relationships, space changes, and student freedom to move around in the elementary classroom are more apparent now then they were a half-century earlier.

Yet, according to Philip Jackson, this informality at first glance may be deceptive. He studied a group of fifty elementary teachers identified as superior in suburban Chicago in the early 1960s. He found them informal but made some careful distinctions.

> 'Informal' as these teachers use the term, really means less formal rather than not formal (original emphasis), for even in the

> most up-to-date classrooms, much that goes on is still done in accordance with forms, rules, and conventions. Today's teachers may exercise their authority more casually than their predecessors, and they may unbend increasingly with experience, but there are real limits to how far they can move in this direction. As a group, our interviewees clearly recognized and respected those limits. For them, the desire for informality was never sufficiently strong to interfere with institutional definitions of responsibility, authority, and tradition. 16

Jackson's comments echo John Dewey's observations of substantial changes in "life conditions" of the classroom but such "atmospheric" modifications have not "really penetrated and permeated the foundations of the educational institution." Moreover, Dewey continued, "the fundamental authoritarianism of the old education persists in various modified forms."[17]

The key that might unlock the puzzle of teacher selectivity in choosing certain student-centered practices, I believe, is what both Jackson and Dewey touch upon--teacher authority. Formal power is delegated to the teacher to transmit knowledge and skills to students in an orderly manner. Maintaining classroom control, an essential exercise of that authority, is a fundamental condition for instruction to occur. Classroom control, of course, can be expressed in a number of forms ranging from coercively direct to charmingly subtle. Still, to the teacher, managing a group of students in an orderly manner is paramount.

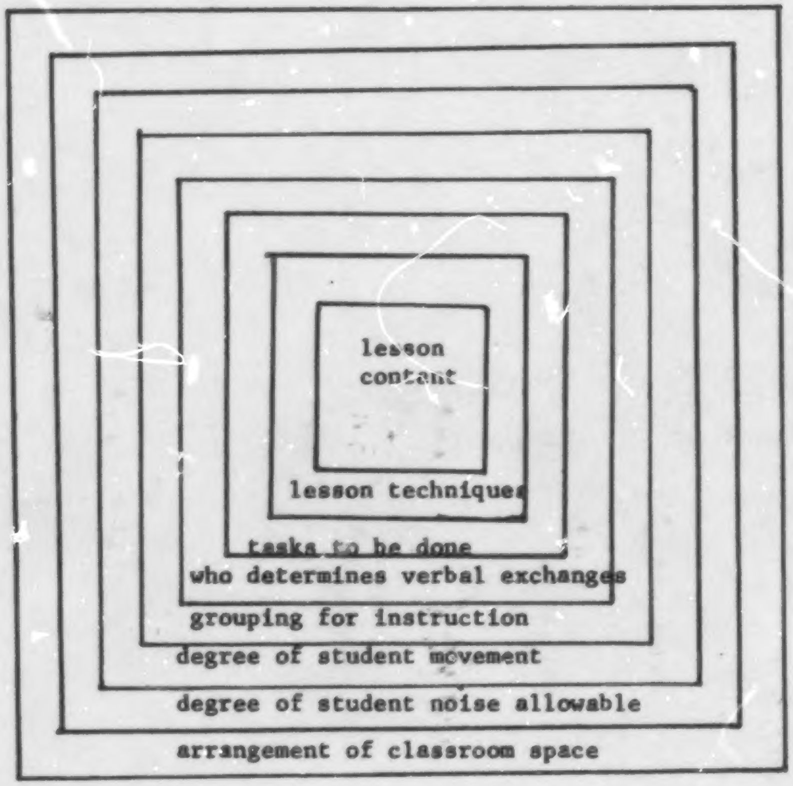
An asymetrical power relationship in the classroom permits the teacher to establish conventions that express the muscle that he or she implicitly has: calling the roll, making assignments, changing students' seats, asking questions, interrupting students to make a point, giving directions, telling students to perform tasks, drinking coffee in front of the class, giving grades, reprimanding students, praising individual effort, etc. These actions reinforce daily the teacher's perogatives, making it plain who is in charge of the classroom.

While there are hundreds of such behaviors that teachers and students engage in weekly that certify the teacher's power, there are, nonetheless, key decisions that are discretionary which touch the very core of classroom instruction and the teacher's authority. Who, for instance, allots time for each of the dozens of tasks assigned daily? Who determines what content will be studied? Who determines what instructional methods will be used? These and other decisions can be arrayed in a series of concentric circles with those closer to the center representing the core of instructional authority.

Many teachers exercise their authority by deciding what will occur in each ring, from seating charts for students to which students will knock dust from the erasers. To such teachers,student participation in any decision in the outer rings are viewed cautiously. At the beginning of this century, all decisions were made solely by the teacher. As progressive ideology about children's development and learning entered the thinking of educators, increased student talk, movement, and participation in the life of the classroom became professionally acceptable forms of conducting lessons.

Substantial numbers of teachers, concerned with maintaining order and limiting classroom noise, yet attracted to the new ideas about children and their development struck compromises between what was viewed as minimum teacher perogatives (i.e. the inner rings) and the new ideology. Because most experienced teachers establish student loyalty and compliance to their authority in the initial weeks of a school year so that they can count on students consistently responding to teacher requests, rearranging desks, students moving around more than they had, establishing learning centers, or dividing pupils into groups is far less threatening and unpredictable to a teacher's control than students determining what should be studied, when, and under what conditions. Not only are such increments of student involvement in the classroom less threatening, once the teacher's

Figure 17. Classroom Decisions Made by the Teacher*


lesson content
lesson techniques
tasks to be done
who determines verbal exchanges
grouping for instruction
degree of student movement
degree of student noise allowable
arrangement of classroom space

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[*] I make no special case for the order in which I have arranged the decisions. The point is that the closer to the center one gets, decisions touch the core of the teacher's authority.

mandate is accepted by students, but these levels of participation offer the best of both worlds: control is maintained through the existing routines and traditions established by the teacher that undergird the moral order of the classroom—all within a less formal, relaxed atmosphere. The fist is tucked gently inside the pillow.[18]

These answers to the two questions on the development of teacher-centered forms of progressivism and informal education offer one explanation that is halfway between speculation and a confident hunch; this quasi-speculation and earlier arguments to explain the general patterns that I found in the data would need further exploration and testing.

Testing the Hypothesis

There are ways, of course, to test these propositions I have developed about teaching continuity and change since the turn of the century. Researchers could study one elementary or secondary school over a quarter-century or more describing the organizational structures, instructional practices, and staff demography and beliefs. The district and community context over the same period of time would provide a framework for the examination of the school. The intersection of external contexts with organizational structures, teacher ideas and instructional practice in one school over an extended period of time should reveal the interplay between stability and change within one school.

Another test would be to seek out those schools where student attendance is voluntary and where instruction is not confined to the classroom. Describing the pedagogical practices that exist in those settings would offer another view to determine the influence of structures upon instruction. Independent and denominational private, public alternative, and some vocational schools suggest themselves immediately as candidates for investigation. Also the Civilian Conservation Corps schools in the 1930s and the Job Corps of the 1960s and 1970s would be appropriate settings to test these hunches.

Additional microethnographies pursuing the studies of Smith and Geoffrey, Mehan, Rist, McPherson, and others who have carefully described what occurred in single classrooms with certain teachers, especially if they encompass more than one school year, would provide competitive sources of data to assess the explanations in this study.[19]

Finally, schools in other countries could be studied where the organizational framework is similar. A group of British researchers have been probing schools and classrooms, producing descriptions and analyses that try to link up how teachers and pupils interact daily with the larger social structure. Teacher practices in the comprehensive secondary school especially, appear quite similar to American high school teaching, but would need to be compared and contrasted in more detail.[20]

Five chapters of descriptions and data with one chapter of possible explanations have been presented. What significance, if any, can be attached to the varied patterns of instruction and the issues of continuity and change that I have explored?

IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

On a number of issues of interest to policymakers, school officials, teachers, and scholars this data on stability and change may have something to say. Consider school reforms, teacher improvement, and current research.

Reform. This is not the place for an essay on school reform. I want to concentrate on those school reforms aimed at improving classroom instruction. Whether ideas came from child-centered advocates, technologically-inspired reformers who see microcomputers in every classroom, enthusiasts dedicated to outflanking teachers by getting teacher-proof materials into student hands, or researchers intent upon disseminating results of effective teaching studies--the unchanging, consistent target was moving the classroom teacher from one set of practices to another. In all of these sporadic efforts to change teacher classroom behavior was the dependable fact that future attempts would be made regardless of what previous efforts had or had not demonstrated. I make no judgment here about the quality or value of any instructional reform over the last century; I do not assume that a proposed change was superior to the practice it intended to replace; nor do I assume that stable teaching practices were ineffective in getting students to learn and thereby should have been changed.

This study, if anything, demonstrates how impervious high school classrooms were to such efforts for nearly a century. What few changes occurred in curricular content, classroom talk, and the formal recitation were overshadowed by the persistent continuity of teaching practices extending back decades into the shadows of a previous century. While I try to avoid judgments on reform I cannot but marvel at the hapless inability of instructional designs ever penetrating the shields erected by high school and classroom structures.

Plausible argument can be made that the reforms were either inappropriate, sloppily implemented, or ill-timed and the remarkable, century-long stability of high school instructional practice is, if anything, a sign of resilient vitality rather than stone-hard resistance. While the argument may be plausible, it would be, I believe, unpersuasive. The same argument, as I have shown, cannot be made for elementary teaching practice. Moreover, too many knowledgable and skilled principals, teachers, and superintendents who were eager to modify high school instruction have given up in exhaustion or despair over the difficulties in getting instructional reforms adopted, and, if adopted, sustained over time. The Denver experience in five high schools with the Eight Year Study offered a glimpse of how tough it was to spread the experimental work of the Progressive Education classes into the rest of faculties and the minor vestiges embedded in course content that remained after 1943. And this in a district where top administrators support for these changes had been present for almost two decades.

I raise this issue of marginal change because over the last decade in which blue-ribbon commissions, panels of professionals, and prestigious study groups have studied the high school,curiously little attention has been paid to classroom instruction in any of their descriptions, analyses, and recommedations. Most changes that were recommended in these studies stressed organizational and structural changes aimed at making high schools more connected to students and the larger community. Little notice was given to the kinds of instruction or its quality. What makes these studies quaint, rather than curious is that students have spent and continue to spend well over three-quarters of their school time sitting in classrooms. More high school studies are imminent. Except for the Stanford University study and one by both the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the National Association of Independent Schools which will include curriculum and instruction, it appears that teaching will play no larger a role in their analyses than an earlier generation of studies.[21]

Connections between high school structure and the external context that may have had profound influence on what occurs in classrooms have not been explored in these studies. The assumption seems to be that teachers teaching five classes a day and students sitting in those rooms over 75% of the school day are either unchangeable features of the

terrain or presumed worthwhile and thereby unsuitable targets for change. Whichever assumption is accurate, the margin for change in teacher instructional patterns that emerged from this study is slim.
Within the current high school organizational structure that is hooked to external set of demands, planned changes aimed at replacing instructional practices--no matter how skillfully executed will fall short of blueprints.

Not so, however, for the elementary school. Here, the margin for intentional changes is broader and more promising given the historical record. The structural differences between elementary and high schools offer a potentially broader arena for reform, i.e. in the lower grades there is sustained contact with children for at least five hours a day and some flexibility in alloting time to instructional activities.

I argue, however, that reforms aimed at altering teacher routines need to secure the teacher's commitment. The teacher needs to be persuaded that a change will be better for children, and not undercut his or her authority and can be adapted to the current setting. Where minimal changes have occurred, it is, I believe, because teacher have absorbed competing ideas. They embraced different ways of viewing the classroom.Also I have argued, based upon the data, that changing the minds of teachers needs to be closely associated with tangible, accessible help in putting the changes into practice. Because most instructional reforms impose increased demands upon the teacher's limited time and energy, help from outside the classroom is, I believe, essential. While there are some Michaelangelos in the classroom, like most other professionals, teachers fall--for the most part--in the middle range and therefore need aid at the classroom level in implementing any alteration in basic classroom conventions. The advisory network, liasons, Innovation Teams, Workshop

Center for Open Education, and other resources to permit teachers to plan talk together seem to be minimum tools in modifying classroom practices.[22]

Data on the enduring patterns of instruction suggest revised notions of what constitutes effectiveness in putting classroom reforms into practice. Remember New York administrator Joseph Loftus's generous estimate in 1941 that 25% of the system's teachers had initiated "in some degree" activity methods. The source for the quote faintly hinted that the statement was asserted proudly. If so, how could pride be expressed with three-quarters of the staff continuing in the dominant teacher-centered instructional patterns--approaches that he found wrong-headed?

In view of the constraints on teachers the difficulty in capturing their attention, 25% may well be viewed as a victory. It certainly would be a victory in other highly-competitive arenas. If Neilsen television ratings, for example, register that high for a program, that show is judged first-rate. Or, if a textbook publisher gains that share of the school market, it is a bonanza. Direct mail executives would jump in in joy over a 10% return. The point is that standards for judging the effectiveness of an instructional reform penetrating classrooms hinges upon an awareness of how limited teachers are in determining what goes on in their rooms. The usual standards of defining success of a reform may need to be revised in the light of evidence demonstrating that large numbers of teachers selectively implemented different classroom approaches.

Improving teacher performance. Basically, there are four strategies to upgrade the quality of classroom instruction: revise selection policies in schools of education and districts hiring teachers; improve preparation programs for apprentices; remove incompetents; retrain existing corps of teachers. Rather than go over the pluses and minuses for each approach, let me focus instead on the implications of the findings in this study for particular strategies. I derive two implications, provided that my assumptions are accepted. Assuming that this core of durable practices is a set of teacher-constructed solutions to cope with the school and classroom they find themselves in and a product of occupational socialization that newcomers experience, the following suggestions emerge as plausible directions to pursue for those who work with candidates for the classroom , newcomers, and veterans.

1. Schools of Education.

Preparing entrants to the profession is one institutional form of gradual change that has had a mild, if not unfocused, effect upon instruction. Data on the enduring stability of teacher-centeredness places college professors of teacher education committed to improving classroom instruction in a familiar dilemma: prepare teachers for what exists in public schools or prepare them to alter what is. Over the decades, patchwork compromises have been fashioned, leaving those who prepare and certify teachers, profoundly dissatisfied.

Current efforts in a number of states to upgrade credential requirements for teachers, establish entry-level tests, and similar measures also mirror public dissatisfaction with the classroom. These solutions to improve teaching quality will produce teachers who can pass test items assessing minimum literacy skills and who will have spent more seat-time in college classrooms. Yet anyone serious about seeking instructional reform knows that it is a courageous leap to view a literacy test or course credits as anything more than proxies for teaching effectiveness that are remotely connected to what teachers do daily in their rooms. Few states or colleges, however, have yet pursued aggressively the obvious suggestion concerning selection and training. These approaches would need to be altered to produce classroom teachers who are more aware of the organizational and professional constraints they must face; more adaptable, resilient, and analytic problem-solvers; and more technically proficient in those techniques that they must master in order to survive. The idea is for a college to produce a teacher trained in the craft, equipped with the generic intellectual skills necessary to move beyond survival, and alter what occurs in the classroom, if the teacher is so-inclined to transcend the typical instructional pattern. Dan Lortie has offered a number of concrete suggestions that develop some of these points.[23]

2. District in-service efforts. Staff development could focus more sharply on two areas. One is improving teacher knowledge and skills for those tasks that they carry out with predictable regularity, regardless of whether a classroom is teacher- or student-centered: questioning, lecturing, explaining, extracting meaning from textbooks, etc. In short, there is a craft portion to teaching that needs to be learned as an apprentice and improved continually even while practicing techniques on a daily basis in the classroom.

The other area is teachers helping teachers. Reducing the isolation and nourishing collegiality are necessary, but far from sufficient, conditions to enable teachers to pursue some directions in instruction that were unfamiliar or risky yet were viewed as helpful to children. Anyone reading a fraction of teacher accounts since 1900 cannot escape the strong impression of how lonely teaching is, how insulated the classroom is from other adult contacts. A shelf-full of studies have confirmed this classroom isolation. Staff development opportunities and strategies designed to bring teachers together to plan, initiate, research, evaluate, and write can chip away at the physical and psychological barriers that separate teachers from one another but, far more important, they can mix practitioner folk wisdom, ingenuity, and organizational moxie in efforts to solve common problems.[24]

Research. The findings of this study also raise some questions while adding data to certain research issues. In particular, I see relevance in this study for research on implementation, organizations, and effective teaching.

First, implementation. Recent reviews on this topic point out the lack of theory and the abundance of descriptive models. But a growing number of case studies of botched school innovations, research on "street-level bureaucrats"(social workers, policemen, teachers, principals) who use their discretion in selectively coping with heavy demands that cannot all be met, and an increasing sensitivity to a "bottom-up" rather than top-down perspective of implementation have moved policymakers to focus attention on service deliverers, i.e. teachers and principals.[25]

Educational policymakers have generally given the rhetorical bow to the importance of the classroom teacher and school principal in implementing instructional or curricular change and then planned what each organizational level was to do, assigned duties, and specified tasks. Offers of aid were often mixed with monitoring and threats of sanctions; these were the frequently used engines that drove the implementation machine. Routines and directives were the nuts and bolts that held it together.

This study showed repeatedly that this process occurred in Washington with the Child Development Program (1938), the expansion of New York City's Activity Program (1941), and Denver's mandate for General Education (1941). A generation later, alternative schools, high school reforms, and informal classrooms were designed at 110 Livingston in New York, the Presidential

Building in Washington,D.C., and the state legislature in Bismarck, North Dakota. This top-down implementation approach was common.

Alternative approaches showed up in occasional efforts to mobilize teachers and principals to plan to implement new policies that they were charged to carry out. Under Newlon and Threlkeld (1922-1930), Denver administrators and teachers jointly worked through a series of complicated steps that produced a system-wide curriculum revision in elementary and secondary subjects. When the course of study was completed, directives replaced collaboration; principals were directed to make sure that teachers were using the course of study as intended and it is unclear what provisions were made at each school to carry off the final step of the implementation process. Washington, D.C.'s first alternative high school, Freedom Annex, was planned wholly by teachers and students although it lasted less than two years. Arlington's Woodlawn, the 1971 alternative high school, was designed by teachers, students, and parents. Open Corridors in New York City worked only with those principals and teachers who wanted to introduce informal approaches into their schools and classrooms. These instances were uncommon.

This study on how teachers taught provides some data that can be used to argue that teachers' commitment and involvement seldom responds to mandates or coercive threats beyond brittle compliance. Where classroom changes occurred, again making the distinction between the appearance of change and its effects, teachers seem to have been active collaborators in the process. The point is that those researchers who approach implementation from the viewpoint of teachers and not from the policymaker's downward perspective can find some support in this study.

Related to implementation is the concept of organizational adaptation. Within an overall pattern of continuity, there were gradual changes in some classroom practices. Were teachers in the 1890s transported to classrooms in the 1980s, they would see similarities, to be sure, but some changes would jar them--especially student movement, levels of acceptable noise,etc. The hybrids of classroom instruction that developed were teacher-shaped adaptations to organizational and larger environmental demands--I have argued. A slow, negotiated adaptation occurred, over time, at an uneven pace and degree in elementary and high school classrooms. How substantial and meaningful such adaptations were are judgments I cannot yet make since the relationship between these modifications and student performance were beyond the scope of this study. That the changes did not touch the inner core of those teacher practices that determined tasks, content, and time allocation is one clue, however, that the changes were, at most, incremental, and, perhaps, peripheral. These adaptations within a larger context of continuity suggest that, if an historical perspective is used, there are, what James March calls "stable processes of change" that can characterize teaching behavior--an essentially conservative process in itself. Looking at the classroom as a catch-basin of stable processes of change--even when the changes may be unpredictable compromises with environmental demands--is, I believe, a promising research direction to consider.[26]

Also how organizational structure and processes shape teaching behavior especially the notion of loose-coupling, is another area about which the data raise some questions. A number of researchers have argued that school processes are linked only nominally to what occurs in classrooms. They point out that teaching activities and the outcomes of instruction, for the most part, are uncontrolled and uninspected by principals and central office supervisors.

Evaluation, for instance, by administrators is infrequent and often detached from serious efforts to improve instruction. One teacher told an interviewer that "If I were to drop dead, the only way they would find out would be by the smell after a few days." Exaggerated sufficiently to make the point, all the evidence I gathered points to how little time was spent overseeing instruction by supervisors in rural and urban, small and large schools in the interwar decades and in the 1960s and 1970s. Evaluation of instruction through the use of test scores or similar signs of student performance to judge teacher or school effectiveness was rarely, if ever, done. Performance contracting was a fad that lasted no longer that a fire-fly in June. Using courses of study or syllabi to prescribe exactly what content had to be covered and what methods were to be used was infrequent also, although the use of Distar programs and CBC in Washington,D.C. are uncommon examples of their use. Just as uncommon are those principals who directly determine what reading or math methods teachers will use in their classrooms.[27]

Thus, these researchers argue, what teachers do in classrooms--the essence of schooling--is uncoordinated and uninspected by those in higher authority. If classroom activities are decoupled from the rest of the organization, what holds the institution together? Other organizational features, they say,such as rules that classify students, teachers, and subjects into categories acceptable to both professionals and community and external requirements from accrediting agencies and universities constitute the bricks and mortar that hold the organization together over time.

This study yielded data that show resilient and enduring continuity in certain instructional patterns. While concern for classroom inspection and its coercive power was apparent among teachers, I found little evidence of frequent supervision or principal control of instruction. To this extent, the data support the concept of loosely-coupled systems as applied to classroom instruction.

A curious twist enters the picture with the continuity in teaching practices, apparent to principals and superintendents even in infrequent, informal classroom visits. Such enduring practices left issues of coordination and control almost irrelevant since most teachers taught in a predictably familiar pattern. Significant departures from the routine were not difficult to detect since school radar equipment that included student, teacher, and parent information networks functioned reasonably well in bringing shifts in teaching practice to administrators' attention. Minor changes in classroom routines or variations among teachers were considered insignificant.

In other words, the school and classroom structures that I have dwelt upon, unintentionally became larger and, I believe, more effective guarantors of coordination than inspection, syllabi, tests,etc. What organizational researchers, then, have put forth as descriptions of schools as places that show classroom activities connected loosely to the rest of the organization, I show as being tightly-coupled, for very different reasons, to an institutional framework and processes--again, far more at the high school than elementary level but,nonetheless, clearly evident in both settings. Also this unintentional tight coupling is ironic: classroom architecture and scheduling of instructional time isolate teachers yet teachers know when deviance in a colleague occurs; thus, they are both alone and connected in ways unhelpful to one another.[28]

Where the data in this study is silent is on the linkage between classroom behaviors and student outcomes. Because I concentrated narrowly upon teaching practices and chose not to appraise the effectiveness of these teaching behaviors on student learning or their performance on tests, a mismatch between these teaching practices and student test scores may exist.

The final research area that this study may speak to is on the point I just raised on effectiveness. Over the last half-century, researchers have sought to pin down precisely what teaching effectiveness is, which teachers have it, and how they got it. The history of that search has been documented numerous times. What is of special interest to this study are recent findings drawn from a number of correlational studies of certain teaching practices at the elementary level that have yielded strong, positive relationships to student test scores on standardized achievement tests in reading and math.[29]

Which practices have shown up favorably?

- .teacher focuses clearly on academic goals.[30]
- .teacher concentrates on tasks alloting the instructional period to instructional tasks rather than socializing. 31
- .teacher presents information clearly; organizing instruction by explaining, outlining, and reviewing; and covers subject matter extensively. 32
- .teacher monitors student progress toward instructional objectives, selecting materials and arranging methods to increase student success. 33
- .teacher paces instruction to fit students. 34
- .teacher feedback is quick and targeted on content of instructional tasks. 35
- .teacher's management abilities prevent disturbances by encouraging cooperation. 36

Barak Rosenshine, reviewing a number of studies, specified six instructional "functions" that have shown repeatedly to have produced improved academic achievement, as measured by test scores:

1. Checking previous day's work
2. Presenting new content/skills
3. Initial student practice (and checking for understanding)
4. Feedback and correctives (reteaching, if necessary)

5. Student independent practice
6. Weekly and monthly reviews[37]

There are substantive, and telling, criticisms of correlational research that isolates certain teacher behaviors, links them to high student test performance at one point in time, and then uses these relationships as a basis for instructional improvement efforts or teacher education curriculum.[38]

Putting aside such criticisms, the point is that this line of research has surged ahead in specifying particular teaching practices as effective. Notice that the sampling I have displayed resembles somewhat the stable core of teaching practices in this study that have persisted since the beginning of the century. The similarity, of course, is not wholly accidental. The practices that have been recently investigated, carefully counted, and compared in effectiveness through pre- and post-tests are themselves teaching activities that have been used for decades in classrooms across the country with great confidence in their efficacy. Let me add quickly that these practices identified as effective are not only associated with teacher-centered classrooms; open classrooms, in their various incarnations, contain most of these practices as was seen in the New York City Activity Program, North Dakota schools, and Washington schools.[39]
I said "resemble" to avoid any foolish leap to inferences linking what I detailed as durable teaching practices and these specific teaching behaviors emerging from recent studies labeled as effective. Beyond the substantive methodological issues associated with correlational research, there are a host of contextual variables, often absent from such investigations, that involve teachers, students, school, class size, grade, time of observation, etc., that influence outcome measures.

The resemblance, however, seems to be sufficiently tantalizing to explore further those teaching practices that show up strongly in correlational findings to determine what can be learned from their past use in classrooms.[40]

On what note I should end this study of continuity and change has bothered me since I began writing the Introduction. My impulses tended toward optimism. After all, one doesn't go into teaching and administration, shuttle back and forth between both kinds of jobs for a quarter-century, without having some strong beliefs about children, improvement of existing institutions, and public service--among the many motives that impel men and women into public school work. Yet, I never felt my optimism soared or was unseasoned by modest expectations. Unlike the Grand Academy of Lagado where Gulliver saw workers trying to extract sunshine from cucumbers, turning ice into gunpowder, and weaving cloth from spiderwebs, I had a restrained, cautious, but nonetheless, buoyant view of improving schools.[41]

But the data can be easily interpreted as presenting an unrelenting, pessimistic picture for any fundamental modification in teaching behavior and school reforms that promise anything beyond marginal, incremental tatters of change that may be insubstantial or, worse, irrelevant. Perhaps.

Another interpetation can be drawn from the data that avoids the dichotomy of optimism-pessimism and converts elements of both into a mix that can be put: what schools and teachers can and cannot do. Recall the metaphor of farming to describe schooling. The essential point was learning to work through an ancient, unchanging process of growth by building efforts around what seeds, plants, insects, and climate were likely to do. By understanding the durability and limits to this process, farmers can improve the yield of crops. But these organic forces, over which a farmer is helpless to control, have to be worked with, not ignored.

Based upon this study, there are, I believe, analogs of organic processes like seeds, plants, and climate in schools and classrooms--shaped by organizational constraints and other factors, that need to be worked through in order to improve what happens within the walls of the building. Certainly, those structures and processes that I have outlined are man-made, not wind, locusts, and drought. Yet, until the man-made structures are altered fundamentally, their power functions as an organic force. They become, what Willard Waller called, the "human nature of the classroom," fundamental traits that need to be reckoned with if changes are to occur.[42]

I draw my optimism from these metaphors because they suggest clearly that there is a margin for change, an elasticity that imagination and large chunks of energy can stetch. There are, to be sure, effective farmers; they produce abundant crops. There are effective teachers; their students' praise recognizes them. There are effective schools scattered across the country where principals and teachers have constructed settings, in the most unlikely places, where learning, growth, and deep satisfaction exist.

Concentrating upon what teachers can do well in classrooms, on what schools can achieve effectively within certain boundaries is a sensible response to the potent processes at work in schools. Labels such as teacher-centered, traditional, child-centered, open classrooms may help researchers and promoters but they do what all labels inevitably do: categorize and simplify. Such names help not a bit in identifying under what conditions what will work with children in boosting both academic performance and personal growth. I have found no magic to either classrooms labeled one way or the other. Effective practices exist in different settings in spite of the severe constraints teachers face. These practices, once identified, should be cultivated as carefully as a gardener who anticipates the approaching harvest.

Thus, in steadfastly refusing to touch the issue of instructional quality and go beyond the question of how teachers taught, I confess that upon that very issue of quality is exactly where I end this study. The variety of what teachers do in classrooms is finite. It is limited by a number of circumstances over which teachers have little influence. Despite these limits, questions of teaching effectiveness become even more demanding since the repertoire of practices is narrower than previously thought or promoted. In this study I suggested a basis for determining the quality of what teachers can do well in classrooms. No longer should the central issue about classrooms be: how teachers ought to teach. Based upon my experience and study of classrooms over the last century, I believe the central question that should be asked is simply: how can teachers teach well?

NOTES

[1] J. Tukey, "The Future of Data Analysis," Annals of Mathematical Statistics, 33, (1962), pp. 13-14.

[2] Basil Bernstein, "On The Classification and Framing of Educational Knowledge," in Michael Young (ed.) Knowledge and Control, (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1971), pp. 47-69; Peter Woods, The Divided School, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), chapters 1, 7, 20; Michael Apple and Nancy King, "What Do Schools Teach?" Curriculum Inquiry, 6, (1977), pp. 341-369; Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, Schooling in Capitalist America, (New York: Basic Books, 1976).

[3] Philip Jackson, Life in Classrooms, (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1968), chapter 1; Seymour Sarason, The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change, (Allyn and Bacon, 1971), chapters 1, 7, 10, 11; Louis Smith and William Geoffrey, The Complexities of an Urban Classroom, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), chapters 3-4; Robert Dreeben, "The School As a Workplace," in W. Traver (ed.) The Second Handbook of Teaching, (New York: Rand McNally, 1973); J.W. Getzels, "Images of the Classroom and Visions of the Learner," School Review, (August, 1974), pp. 527-540; Carol Weinstein, "The Physical Environment of the School: A Review of the Research," Review of Educational Research, 49, (Fall, 1979), pp. 577-610; John Meyer and Brian Rowan, "The Structure of Educational Organizations," in M. Meyer, (ed.) Environments and Organizations, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1978); Hugh Mehan, Learning Lessons, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979), chapter 3.

[4] Willard Waller, The Sociology of Teaching, (New York: John Wiley, 1965), chapters 22-23; Dan Lortie, Schoolteacher, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), chapters 2-3; Estelle Fuchs, Teacher Talk, (New York: Anchor Books, 1969); Wayne Hoy,"Pupil Control Ideology and Organizational Socialization," School Review, 77, (1969), pp. 257-265.

[5] I avoid the word "ideology" for reasons cited by Carl Kaestle, "Ideology and American Educational History," (paper delivered at meeting of History of Education Society, October 3, 1981, pp. 1-10). While I know that beliefs held by teachers and administrators are shaped by larger social forces and often intersect with both personal and social issues, I also recognize that these beliefs can be grouped into related propositions which, if comprehensively described, could be labeled "ideology." To map out those intersections and groupings systematically would be beyond the scope of this study. Thus, I do not use the word "ideology." In this explanation, I concentrated more on the apparent linkages between individual behavior and ideas and less on the impact of belief systems upon group behavior.

[6] Chittenden, et. al., p. 17.

7
Leonard Covello, The Heart Is the Teacher, (Totowa, New Jersey: Littlefield, Adams and Co., 1970), p. 197.

Mary H. Metz, "Clashes in the Classroom: The Importance of Norms for Authority," Education and urban Society, 11, (November, 1978), pp. 13-47; Lortie, chapter 5; Chittenden, et. al., chapters 4-7.

9
Gross, et. al., Implementing Organizational Innovations, chapters 4-5, 7, 8; Smith and Keith, chapters 1, 5, 7, 9-11; David Goodwin, Delivering Educational Service: Urban Schools and Schooling Policy, (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1977), chapter 6; Aaron Wildavsky and Jeffrey Pressman, Implementation, (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1973); Milbrey McLaughlin, "An Exploratory Study of School District Adaptation," (Los Angeles: Rand Corp., 1979).

10
For example, see Peter Woods, Divided School, chapters 5-7.

11
Mary H. Metz, Classrooms and Corridors, (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 250-251.

12
Lortie, p. 147.

13
Sarason, p. 63.

14
Woods, p. 12.

15
Interview with Wilkinson, March 22, 1982.

16
Jackson, Life in Classrooms, p. 29.

17
Dworkin, pp. 129-130.

18
This point is made often in David Swift, Ideology and Change in the Public Schools, (Columbus, Ohio: Charles Merrill Publ. Co., 1971).

19
Ray Rist, The Urban School: a Factory for Failure, (Cambridge, Mass.: Massachusett Institute of Technology Press, 1973); Gertrude mcPherson, Small Town Teacher, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972); the other works have already been cited.

20
See also Peter Woods and Martin Hammersley, (eds.), School Experience, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977); Paul Willis, Learning to Labour: How

Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs, (Westmead, England: Saxon House, 1977).

[21] A. Harry Passow, "Secondary Education Reform: Retrospect and Prospect," (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1976).

[22] This point has been made by many other school participants and researchers. See. for example: Larry Cuban, "The Powerlessness of Irrelevancy," Educational Leadership, 25, (February, 1968), pp. 393-396; Milbrey McLaughlin and Paul Berman, the Change Agent Studies, The Process of Change, volume 3, (Los Angeles: Rand Corp., 1975); Milbrey McLaughlin, "Implementation as Mutual Adaptation in Classroom Organizations," Teachers College Record, (1976).

[23] Lortie, pp. 228-234.

[24] See Jackson, Life in Classrooms, chapter 1 and pp. 159-177; Sarason, pp. 105-108.

[25] Richard Elmore, "Organizational Models of Social Program Implementation," Public Policy, 26, (Spring, 1978); Michael Lipsky and Richard Weatherley, "Street Level Bureaucrats and Institutional Innovation: Implementing Special Education Reform," Harvard Educational Review, 47, (1977); Eleanor Farrar, et. al., "Alternative Conceptions of Implementation," (Cambridge, Mass.: Huron Institute, 1978).

[26] James March, "Footnotes to Organizational Change," Administrative Science Quarterly, 26, (December, 1981), p. 563; McLaughlin, "Exploratory Study of School DIstrict Adaptation;" Howard E. Aldrich, Organizations and Environments, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1979), pp. 97-105.

[27] Sanford Dornbusch and Richard Scott, Evaluation and the Exercise of Authority, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1975), p. 167.

[28] Meyer and Rowan, pp. 78-87; Karl Weick, "Educational Organizations As Loosely Coupled Systems," Administrative Science Quarterly, 21, (March, 1976), pp. 1-19.

[29] For reviews of the literature on teacher effectiveness, see: N.L. Gage, The Scientific Basis of the Art of Teaching, (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1977), chapters 1 and 3; Michael Dunkin and Bruce Biddle, The Study of Teaching, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974), chapters 5-10; Journal of Teacher Education, 27, (Spring, 1976) is devoted to research on teacher effectiveness.

[30] Barak Rosenshine, "Content, Time, and Direct Instruction," in P. L.

Petersen and Herbert Walberg (eds.) Research on Teaching (Berkeley, Calif.: McCutchan Publishing Co., 1979).

[31] Ibid.; also T.L. Good, "Teacher Effectiveness in the Elementary School," Journal of Teacher Education, 30, (1979).

[32] Rosenshine; William J. Tikunoff and Beatrice Ward, "Ecological Perspectives for Successful School Practice: Knowledge of Effective Instruction," n.d., n.p.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

[36] T. L. Good and D. A. Grouws, "The Missouri Mathematics Effectiveness Project," Journal of Educational Psychology, 71, (1979).

[37] Barak Rosenshine, "Teaching Functions in Instructional Programs," paper delivered at NIE Conference at Airlie House, Virginia, February, 1982, p. 5.

[38] Walter Doyle, "Research on Classroom Contexts," Journal of Teacher Education, 32, (November-December, 1981), p. 3; Gary Fenstermacher, "A Philosphical Consideration of Recent Research on Teacher Effects," Review of Research in Education, 6, pp. 157-183.

[39] Communication from Kim Marshall, Boston Public Schools.

[40] Tommy Tomlinson, "Effective Schools: Mirror or Mirage," Today's Education, (April-May, 1981), pp. 48-50.

[41] Joseph Sisk, "Untested Assumptions," Harpers, (May, 1981), p. 70.

[42] Waller, Preface.

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APPENDIX

The five categories that I use to capture dominant instructional patterns are: classroom arrangements, group instruction, classroom talk, student movement, and classroom activities. I recognize that these categories in no way capture the totality of teaching. They are, at best, windows of the classroom. They are visible to observers. They describe the terrain of the classroom while accounting for the major chunks of time that teachers and students spend together. And, of most importance, these categories are within the power of the teacher to determine for his or her classroom: how the space should be arranged, who should talk, what homework to assign, where students should go within the room, etc.

The issue is whether or not certain patterns in these categories cluster together to create regularities in classrooms. I believe that they do. In the following discussion, I offer reasons for this belief. References are to those books and articles listed under Sources Used, pp. 347-361

1. Organization of space in the classroom. If movable desks or student chairs are arranged in rows facing either the blackboard or teacher's desk then there is a high probability that the instruction is teacher-centered. The rationale for the assertion is:

   a. Such an arrangement is intentional (except for the classrooms where desks where bolted to the floor). Furniture arrangement is seldom mandated by a school board, superintendent, or principal. The teacher decides (or accepts prevailing norms) use of classroom space. Furniture placement, consciously or not, expresses the teacher's views of how best to teach, maintain order, and how students learn.

   b. When all students face the teacher or blackboard where directions, assignments, tests, or class recitation occurs whole-group instruction is encouraged. Teacher-student exchanges gain higher priority and legitimacy than ones between students.

   c. Surveillance is easier for a teacher with space arranged in this manner. Threats to classroom order can be seen quickly and dealt with expeditiously.

d. Such a configuration of classroom space limits students' movement within a classroom to that which the teacher permits.

It needs to be mentioned, however, that for the early decades of this century when desks were fixed to the floor, there were teachers who ingeniously and with much energy overcame that obstacle and introduced student-centered practices into the classroom. Such furniture may have discouraged many teachers but it did not prevent some from altering their teaching practices. With movable desks and chairs, other arrangements became possible.

If desks are arranged into a hollow square, horseshoe, or tables are scattered around the room permitting students to face one another and talk, student-centered instruction becomes a much stronger possibility. But far more information about what happens in the classroom would be needed since teacher-centered instruction can, and often does, occur in these seating arrangements. (Getzel, 1974; Weinstein, Carol, 1979; Sommer, 1969).

2. Instructional grouping and classroom activities. If class space is organized into student-centered arrangements, i.e. tables and desks where students can face one another, carrels, rug-covered area for a reading corner, etc., one needs to look for evidence of student movement, student participation in verbal discourse, diverse grouping patterns, and the extent of project activities (or learning centers). Projects (a common term used in the 1920s and 1930s to describe a child-centered activity) and learning centers (a phrase used often in movement to install informal education after 1967) assumed that students can learn effectively as individuals or in small groups while making decisions independent of the teacher.

Thus, the external signs of a student-centered classroom would include furniture arrangements that encourage face-to-face exchanges and small group meetings; work stations in the classrooms (project areas or learning centers) where individual and small groups of students operate in a self-directed manner, and evidence of students moving about without securing the teacher's permission. The teacher's desk is no longer front and center; often, the room lacks a discernible front and rear. (Barth, 1972; Silberman, 1971; Bussis, et. al.,1976; Perrone, 1972, 1977;)

Let me add quickly that the simple presence of a project corner or learning centers, like tables scattered around the room, do not make a classroom student-centered. Much of the literature on such settings in the 1920s and 1970s focused upon a process of learning and the teacher's grasp of the underlying principles in child development and learning. Seating arrangements, projects, and centers are a few visible signs but in no way guarantee that the process will occur or that the teacher understands the principles involved. To suggest that only the physical arrangements and available artifacts recaptured in written accounts and photographs represent what a William Kilpatrick or Harold Rugg of the 1920s espoused and a Lillian Weber and Vito Perrone of the 1970s advocated would trivialize complex processes.

3. Classroom Talk. The evidence that teachers talk far more than students in classrooms dates back to Romiett Stevens' work at the turn of the century. That pattern of teacher talk consuming most of the instructional discourse in the form of telling, explaining, and questioning is a proxy for a teacher-centered classroom. Student talk in such a classroom is generally confined to responding to content questions from the teacher, asking procedural questions (e.g. will it be on the test?), and covert conversations with classmates. The teacher determines what questions have to be asked, who should be asked, and the quality of the student response. It is a classroom discourse that contains implicit rules that

students come to learn over time. (Mehan, 1979; Stevens, 1912; Hoetker and Ahlbrand, 1969).

These five categories, then, contain the pieces that teachers arrange into instructional patterns. Organizing the classroom space, grouping for instruction, classroom talk, student movement, and classroom activities as they materialize in schools point to a variety of teaching patterns. These categories, I believe, can extract from the data dominant instructional patterns in classrooms.